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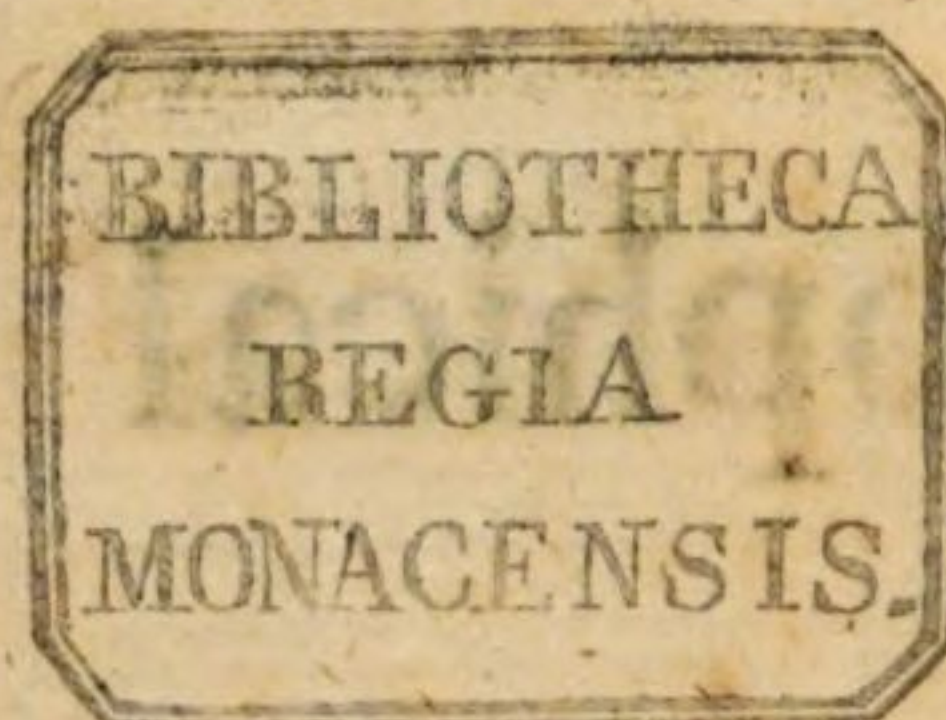
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THE
PHILOSOPHICAL
WORKS
LORD BOLINGBROKE'S
Philosophical Works.

VOL. III.



THE
PHILOSOPHICAL
WORKS

Of the late Right Honorable

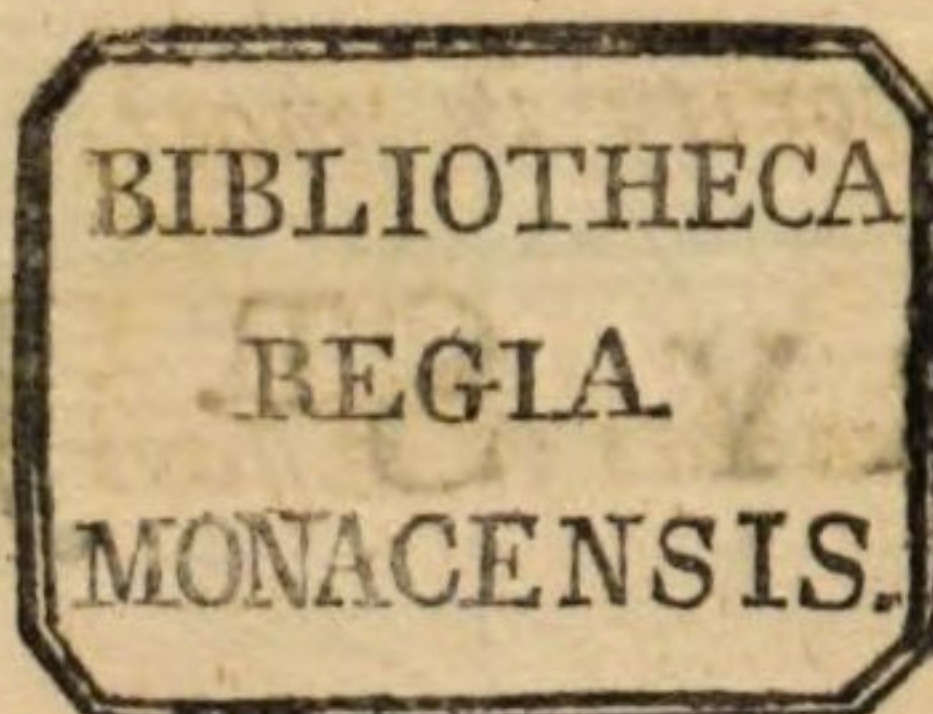
HENRY ST. JOHN,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE.

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C O N T E N T S.

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Concerning authority in matters of religion

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ESSAYS

THE FOURTH.

SECTION XVI.

IF we inquire after the causes of that strange multiplication of sects, which have grown up, from the apostolical age to this, among Christians, it seems to me that they are to be found in the metaphysical madness of philosophers mixing with the enthusiasm of the first Christians, in the cabalistical practice of giving different senses to the same passages of holy writ, in the uncertainty of tradition, and in the use that a distinct order of men has made, in every christian state, of these and other circumstances to acquire dominion over private consciences.

MEN run naturally from extreme to extreme. The farther they have gone into one, the more likely it is that when they recover from it they will hurry as far into another: so that reformation is often nothing more than a change of error. Thus it happened in the pagan theology. The professors of it, and the people in general, had acknowledged a divine nature; which was human nature under a different name, and placed in a different habitation. Their divinities, from **MOMUS** the son of night, up to **JUPITER** the father of

gods and men, were in truth celestial and immortal men, endued with more knowledge, and with more and greater powers ; but with all these after the manner of men, and divested neither of human passions nor of human vices. These objects of adoration were monstrous. So was the worship paid to them. But then, as fast as philosophers exploded these corporeal notions, for such they may be properly called, of the divine nature, and endeavoured to spiritualise it in their thoughts by abstraction from the human, they refined theology, with much confusion and obscurity of ideas, from a system of physical into a system of metaphysical fables : and a sort of intellectual mythology took the place of the former. Mythology, properly so called, served in the infancy of science to conceal the ignorance of philosophers. Of the cosmogonia they made a theogonia. Such the poets taught ; and multiplied polytheism by their supposed science, and very real flattery. Allegory succeeded, and served to conceal the absurdity of theology. They who taught it grew as mad as their predecessors had been absurd, and very little less profane. The few remains of pythagorean doctrines, the metaphysical and theological parts of PLATO's writings, and above all those of the latter Pythagoreans and Platonicians which are in our hands, will justify what is here advanced ; for, surely, no men, who were thought to be in their senses, and were suffered to go about without their keepers, did ever talk such nonsense, as is to be found in PORPHYRY, PLOTINUS, JAMBLICUS, and those

those who have been infected with the same phrensy. Such of these philosophers as opposed christianity, opposed to the marvellous of this theology the marvellous of their own; and none of our angelical or seraphic doctors, none of our ravished mystics, ever rose higher in illuminations, visions, and rapturous unions with the divinity, than some of them. On the other hand, many of these philosophers became converts in different manners. Platonism mixed easily with christianity: but they who retained most of the former, infected the latter with innumerable errors; and planted or watered all the heresies that started up daily in the first ages of the church. Such were the Gnostics or the learned, who, under pretence of improving, corrupted the simplicity of the religion they had embraced. They who became afterwards the greatest lights of the church, apologists, confessors, saints, and martyrs, were determined to christianity by their philosophy, as well as the others, and came full fraught with platonism into the holy pale. But they used it more modestly. They made it the hand-maid, not the rival, of christianity: and tho this hand-maid governed the family, and took a principal share in ordering the whole scheme and economy of it, yet the authority of the mistress was always pretended. JUSTIN owns that platonism prepared him to be a Christian: and ORIGEN, a man far superior to the good martyr, ran as platonically mad, in the second century, as PICUS of Mirandola, TICINUS, PATRICIUS, or any of the re-

4 PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS. Essay 4.
nowned platonicians, in the fifteenth. I know not whether the despair of attaining any other way a full knowledge of divine truths, which SOCRATES and PLATO had so often inculcated, might not dispose these men to receive a revelation, to prefer faith to uncertainty, and, since they could not fix their minds on these subjects by reason, to fix them by authority, as the disciples of PYTHAGORAS did.

THO I ascribe so much to the mere influence of philosophy, and believe it to have been the frantic mother of a frantic offspring, I do not mean to exclude absolutely that of grace on this occasion, tho I confess that I have no conception of it; nor to deny that this directed in some measure the other: and, to prove that I do not, I will quote the example and authority of St. AUSTIN, to shew how these two co-operated in him, and how the first prepared him, by God's immediate appointment, for the last, in one of the most sublime articles of christian faith. The faint laments, in the seventh book of his Confessions, the grievous errors in which he had been engaged concerning the divine nature, and the original of evil, on both of which he had followed the opinions of the Manicheans. He relates the steps by which he was delivered from these errors, as well as from the superstition of astrology and divination, and the approaches he made to truth by the helps that God procured him. After this, he breaks out into ejaculations of thanks to God, who had taken pity on him, and had procured him some books of platon-

-37 22

tonic

tonic philosophy, wherein he found the divinity of the Word established by many arguments. Of the incarnation of the Word, indeed, he found nothing. But he found it afterwards in the scriptures, and he remained persuaded that God had prepared him, by this accidental information, for what he was to learn, when he should study the scriptures, concerning the humiliation of the Word made flesh *; the reasons of which persuasion he gives in the twentieth chapter. Thus you see how PLATO, in the wanderings of a wild imagination, had discovered, in part at least, one of the greatest mysteries of christianity; and how God made use of this truth, which he who published it did not know to be such, for the conversion of one of the greatest doctors and saints of the church. What wonder is it that metaphysics, the very dotage of philosophy, should bear witness to some of those truths, which may come out of the mouths of babes and sucklings?

SECTION XVII.

ANOTHER cause of the multiplication of extravagant opinions and sects, in christianity, has been the arbitrary practice of giving different senses to the same passages of the bible. A practice de-

* *Miseratus es terram et cinerem — procurasti mihi per quendam hominem, immanissimo typho turgidum, quosdam platoniorum libros ex graeca lingua in latinam versos, et ibi legi &c.*—Non quidem his verbis, sed hoc idem omnino multis et multiplicibus suaderi rationibus, quod in principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum.—in quos me propterea priusquam scripturas tuas considerarem, credo voluisti incurrere, ut imprimeretur &c.

6 PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS. Essay 4.
rived from the jewish masters, the worst certainly
that can be followed if we seek truth, and are de-
sirous to preserve any precision either in fact or
argument. Among the lowest artifices, that have
been employed by those who seek to impose their
own inventions under some other and better autho-
rity than their own, this has been one of the lowest
and grossest, tho not the least successful. It is in
truth a kind of forgery, since it serves to make an
author say what he had no intention to say, or ren-
ders at the best uncertain what he did intend to say
when he writ with the greatest clearness. The
jewish rabbins have done by the Old, and our
christian rabbins by the New and Old testament
both, what PETER did by his father's will in our
friend SWIFT's Tale of a tub. The text was against
him, but by a new combination of the same words,
or syllables, or letters, he made it speak for him
and support his claim. It had been well if MAR-
TIN and JOHN, and the rest of PETER's brethren,
for he had many more, which the historian thought
it not worth his while to mention, had stood their
ground like good Caraites, and had adhered to the
text in the plain and obvious meaning of it, in-
stead of imitating the very men whom they have
opposed, and whom they laugh at. But they have
done otherwise. They have supported their deci-
sions by the same unjustifiable means, by which the
rabbinist PETER supported his. Nay they have
done more, they have admitted divers codicils, and
have, like him, supposed them to be of equal au-
thority with the will, tho it is plain that the father
I speaks

speaks in the will, and his stewards or other domestics in the codicils. Allow me another comparison: it may illustrate the folly, as the former explains the fraud, of this practice. The Chinese reverence much the table of FOHI, which must be nine or ten centuries older than ADAM, according to their chronology. This table consists of several lines, some shorter, some longer, and placed in a certain order like that of a diagram or scheme, serving, as they imagine, to the design or demonstration of the most sublime knowledge. The learned men among them have been employed several thousand years in attempts to draw some of this sublime knowledge out of the table. The way they have taken, and what other could they take if they had leisure enough to take any? has been to make all the possible transpositions, and different combinations, of these lines, in hopes of affixing some sense to this mystical table. The consequence has been, that they have affixed several, and that they agree in none. Now tho I am persuaded that the accounts the Jesuits * give us of this table are imperfect, and that something more than barely these unequal lines, something hieroglyphical at least, belongs to it; yet whether it be so or no, the anecdote is equally apposite to my purpose: for in either case, the chinese and the christian critics have been employed alike. If the table consists of unintelligible lines, and it would be the same if it consisted of unintelligible words, whereof FOHI has given no clue to explain and de-

* Scien. Sinica.

termine the sense, the chinese critics have been employed just as reasonably, as the christian expositors of mysteries neither fully nor plainly revealed by revelation itself. If it be said that the table, which none but he who made it could explain, explains itself, as our scriptures do in all the essential parts of them, the comparison holds still; for the learned Chinese must have done, as the learned Christians have done, and have made mysteries for some purpose or other where they found none. It is impossible by any means, that art can find, to see in the dark; but it is easy to contrive glasses that shall shew the plainest and most uniform object in a mist, and under various forms in the clearest day. The first is a silly, and the last a knavish attempt. I said just now that it was a kind of forgery. I do not recal my words, but add, that in the case here supposed the Chinese are much more excusable, than the Christians; for if the Chinese have forged different words of FOHI, Christians have forged different words of God.

How can we lay less than this to their charge, when we consider in how many different, remote, and inconsistent senses, such as destroy one another, and such as are advanced on no authority but that of their own imaginations, they interpret the same passages of holy writ? There is, according to these doctors, a grammatical, a literal or historical, an allegorical or figurative, an anagogical or divine, and a tropological or moral, sense. Some, or all of these, may be applied to the same sentence, nay
to

to the same word. Light, in that noble passage of the book of Genesis, where it is said, “ Let “ there be light, and there was light,” signifies very plainly, in the grammatical, literal, and only proper sense, the corporeal light which God created, and concerning which alone it was at all to the purpose to speak in that place. But divines, by their arbitrary power over the scriptures, make it to signify the Messiah allegorically, and tropologically or anagogically the inward light of grace, or the outward splendor of celestial glory. Thus again, by virtue of the same power, Jerusalem, which is the name of a town, has been made to signify the vision of peace, the church militant, the church triumphant, and the soul of a believer*. The sense of no writings, neither sacred nor profane, can be ever fixed, if they remain subject to such licentious interpretations. These interpretations have served, and they could be intended to serve, by the Jews who set, and by the Christians who followed the example, no other purpose, than that of furnishing the rabbins of both religions with means of giving a color of divine authority to all their own inventions. The absurdities which the former have advanced on such interpretations, seconded by those of their oral law and cabala, and which you may find in our modern writers that were skilled in rabbinical learning, are innumerable, and pass all measure of probability ; so that one cannot help being astonished, when some of our christian divines

* Vid. CALMET.

lament most piously the loss of those rules, according to which the Jews interpreted their scriptures, as they suppose; for that there were any such stated rules observed is but supposition.

It is more probable that the Jews did as the Christians have done; that they followed their several imaginations, or their several theological, and even secular interests. This was the case among Jews and Christians both: and if it may be said, which is not very clear however, that the latter have not fallen generally into so many puerilities and palpable errors as the others, the most unreasoning, the most ignorant, and the most absurd of men; yet they have rendered theology more voluminous, and, with respect to the divine nature and economy, more contentious, than it was before. St. AUSTIN seems to aim at a sort of composition about the interpretation of the scriptures, in a letter to MARCELLINUS*. He says, that “how good soever any reason may appear, it is false and deceitful if it contradicts them; and that how clearly soever we may think any thing deduced from them, if the thing be manifestly against reason, we are deceived; it is not the true sense of the passages alledged: truth and they cannot stand in opposition.” We may observe in this place, what is to be observed often in the writings of this saint, a gingle of words, that pretends to strength and precision, and has neither really.

* Ep. cxliii.

THE first proposition supposes a case, that can never happen among reasonable men, who have received the christian revelation for genuine after a sufficient examination of the external and internal proofs. Such men, having found nothing that makes it inconsistent with itself, nor that is repugnant to any of those divine truths which reason and the works of God demonstrate to them, will never set up reason in contradiction to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehensible as to their manner of being. If they did, their reason would be false and deceitful; they would cease to be reasonable men: and St. AUSTIN says nothing to the purpose, if he confounds these things with such as imply contradiction; and means an opposition of reason to the former only. But if we could suppose, or if St. AUSTIN could mean to suppose, that they who followed the rule he lays down in another place, the rule of believing first, in hopes of understanding afterwards, should discover things, when they came to examine in order to understand, that implied contradiction, his conclusion would be false. They would be obliged in this case to reject the revelation, not their reason; or to fall at once into a general and particular absurdity: the general absurdity of renouncing the faculties God had given them of distinguishing truth from falsehood, good from evil; and the particular absurdity of renouncing, in favor of the internal, that very rule by which they had judged

ed in favor of the external proofs of this revelation.

THE second proposition admits and encourages the very practice we censure so justly, for which the saint was so famous, and by which he contributed so much to promote contentions in his own days, and to perpetuate them to ours. The practice of deducing doctrines from the scriptures, that are not evidently contained in them; for if they were evidently contained in them, they could not be said to be deduced from them; is admitted. It is admitted, that these deductions may be manifestly against reason. Several such there were, and among them some of his own. Reason is made the judge of doctrines thus deduced; but when reason condemns any, divines, the inventors or fautors of them, are at liberty to evade the objections they cannot answer, by interpretations of the same passages in some other and new sense. Who does not see that the direct tendency of this practice is exactly the same as the event has proved it to be? It composes and propagates a religion, seemingly under the authority of God, but really under that of man. The principles of revelation are lost in theology, or disfigured by it: and whilst some men are impudent enough to pretend, others are silly enough to believe, that they adhere to the gospel, and maintain the cause of God against infidels and heretics, when they do nothing better, nor more, than espouse the conceits of men, whom enthusiasm, or the ambition

ambition of forming sects, or of making a great figure in them, has inspired. If you ask now what the practice of the christian fathers, and of other divines, should have been, in order to preserve the purity of faith, and to promote peace and charity, the answer is obvious, and so evidently agreeable to right reason, that the modestest man alive might make it before an ecumenical council without blushing. They should have adhered to the word of God : they should have paid no regard to heathen philosophy, jewish cabala, the fallies of enthusiasm, or the refinements of human ingenuity : they should have embraced, and held fast the articles of faith and doctrine, that were delivered in plain terms, or in unequivocal figures : they should not have been dogmatical where the sense was doubtful, nor have presumed even to guess where the Holy Ghost left the veil of mystery undrawn. If the council should decree that this answer was erroneous, and that the system of christianity would have been incomplete and insufficient without these adventitious helps, let us make no scruple of saying that the council would decree blasphemously, as more councils than one have done, since they would decree that infinite wisdom had not proportioned means to ends, or that the ends of infinite wisdom were more or other than the gospel of CHRIST assigns.

SECTION XVIII.

THE uncertainty of that precarious tradition, whose authority has been so magnified, may be set down as a third cause of the multiplication of doctrines and sects in the christian church. The truth of facts, however notorious, and even of those that men have the least interest or temptation to falsify, is trusted very unsafely to tradition. How much more unsafe must this conveyance be, when it is that of opinions and doctrines intricate, and therefore easily mistaken; disputed or disputable, and therefore industriously misrepresented? BARROW, in his Exposition on the creed, takes away this great foundation of theology; for tho he asserts that there are proper and sufficient means to discern the genuine doctrines and dictates of christianity, yet he leaves us in effect none but the writings of the evangelists, and the epistles of two or three apostles who had been disciples. According to him and to right reason, the first and best way of preserving doctrines is to preserve them in the writings of the authors of them; tho even this cannot be deemed absolutely secure. It is far from being certain that genuine peripateticism is every where plainly read in the writings of ARISTOTLE as they are come down to us: and if PYTHAGORAS and SOCRATES had writ, or if the works of ZENO were extant, we should be best assured, better than any other way, what their philosophies were;

were; but still not without some possibility of error. Another way of preserving doctrines is to preserve them in the writings of disciples that immediately received them from the authors. Thus the writings of PLATO and XENOPHON tell us, with a good degree of certainty, what SOCRATES taught: and yet these writings give very different and contradictory accounts of the Socratic philosophy. The next way that BARROW mentions is the preservation of doctrines in the writings of those who writ at larger distances of time, as those of the Stoics were preserved in the writings of CICERO, SENECA, and EPICTETUS. This way he allows to be more imperfect than the former, because every writer is apt to misapprehend and misrepresent; to do somewhat more than transcribe; to comment and descant; to adorn and set out, to confirm or confute the doctrine they relate, in order thereto representing it with advantage to their purpose. The last way is that of oral tradition, the most liable to defect and corruption of any, according to this judicious expositor. Men do as before, and in this case with greater advantage, “accommodate doctrines
“to their own prejudices, inclinations, and designs. The farther such tradition departs from
“the original spring, the more subject it is to
“contract such alterations and impurities. Every
“doctrine, thus propagated, is like a stream
“at the head, small and narrow, but clear and
“pure. Proceeding on, it grows larger and
“fouler. So tradition swells, by taking in what
“oblique

“ oblique chanel of private fancy and pragmatical invention discharge into it; and, by receiving tincture from particular inclination or politic design, it grows muddy and feculent.”

THE genuine doctrines, and dictates of christianity have not been conveyed to us by the first of these four ways; for the saviour published his gospel by preaching, and by occasional discourses, and not by writing. But they have been preserved by the second; for two of the four evangelists had been disciples from the first, and witnesses, not only of all that had passed during his mission, but of his resurrection. They had, therefore, received immediately from the author the doctrines they published in his name. Who the other two were, it is impossible to say with sufficient assurance amidst the fabulous or little authentic reports of ecclesiastical writers. But if MARK was the convert, the scholar, and the amanuensis of PETER, his testimony comes nearer to that required under this head, since PETER was a disciple, one of the twelve, than the testimony of LUKE, who belonged in all these relations to PAUL; since PAUL was no disciple, neither one of the twelve, nor one of the seventy; had received nothing immediately from CHRIST; nor had any apostolical commission, except that which he assumes in the Acts of the apostles written by LUKE, and dictated, probably, by himself. I say probably, because it is possible LUKE might have been an eye

eye and ear witness of part of all he relates in the Acts, as St. JEROM observes; tho he could be no more than an hearsay witness of what he relates in the Gospel, since he owns, in the beginning of it, that he writ, like many others, what he had been told.

WHEN divines urge, on this occasion, that the differences between MATTHEW and MARK, as well as others, are accounted for, and an entire harmony of the Gospels is established, by critics, so that they all confirm one another; infidels, I know, will cavil, and sometimes plausibly, against many things that must be assumed to make this harmony appear, and to reconcile these differences. When it is urged again, that the gifts of the Holy Ghost and an immediate inspiration being bestowed on all the disciples in an eminent manner and alike, they are all to be esteemed witnesses alike; and they all received the doctrines of christianity immediately from God, the author of it, tho not by the mouth of the saviour whilst he was in the flesh; I know too, that the same men will not remain without a reply. For instance, they will insist that all this, if allowed, will prove nothing in favor of MARK nor LUKE, nor even PAUL himself, who were neither of the twelve nor of the seventy: after which they will add perhaps *ex abundantia*, that, none of these three having been designed by God to stand in the place of that disciple who had betrayed JESUS, and to fill up the number of the apostles, MAT-

THIAS alone, with the eleven, could pass in any sense for one of those disciples who had received the doctrines of christianity immediately from the author of them; tho the seventy might be, as it is said they were, appointed to be witnesses of the resurrection. ERASMUS, in the first chapter of his Paraphrase on the Acts, makes CHRIST say to all the disciples, that the Holy Spirit, which he had breathed upon them, and which he promised should descend upon them from above, would not only recal to their minds all he had taught them, but suggest likewise to them whatever else it might become necessary for them to know. But the cavillers of whom we speak will urge that these words were added by ERASMUS for reasons very obvious, and are not contained in the text; nor is even the sense of them implied so far, as to authorise the disciples, and much less any that were not of their number, to add any thing to the conditions of salvation, that CHRIST himself had imposed. Such cavils will be raised, I say: but they will deserve to have little weight as long, as it is out of dispute that we have in our hands the Gospels of * MATTHEW and JOHN, who give themselves to us for eye-witnesses of all that CHRIST did, and of all that happened to him, and ear-witnesses at the same time of all the doctrines he taught. Two chanel's were as sufficient as four to convey these doctrines to the

* N. B. I speak of both alike, tho I am not ignorant of what has been said that might weaken the authority of MATTHEW's Gospel.

world, and to preserve them in their original purity. The manner too, in which these evangelists recorded them, was much better adapted to this purpose, than that of PLATO, or even of XENOPHON, to preserve the doctrines of SOCRATES. The evangelists did not content themselves to give a general account of the doctrines of CHRIST in their own words, nor presume, in feigned dialogues, to make him deliver their opinions in his own name, and as his own doctrines: they recorded his doctrines particularly; they recorded them in the very words in which he taught them; and they were careful to mention the several occasions on which he delivered them to his disciples or others. If therefore PLATO and XENOPHON tell us, with a good degree of certainty, what SOCRATES taught, the two evangelists seem to tell us, with much more, what the saviour taught, and commanded them to teach. In a word, we may say, on these grounds, that the genuine doctrines of christianity have been preserved much better, than those of heathen philosophy, in the second way of preserving doctrines, tho they have not been preserved in the first and best, as some of the others have been.

THE third and fourth ways of preserving doctrines, which BARROW mentions, have so near a relation, that they may be thrown into one. They who decide about doctrines, or who write about them, at great distances of time from the first disciples, are more easily imposed upon by

traditions, and can more easily impose them on others. Both these things fell out: and no case can be well supposed, wherein the truth of fact, or the purity of doctrine, was so liable to be corrupted, or was in fact so much, or so soon corrupted, as in the propagation of christianity. The mixed crowd of Jews and heathens that embraced it, and the very manner of propagating it, rendered this corruption unavoidable.

THE Jews had begun long before this time to corrupt their own religion. They had borrowed many superstitious opinions from Egypt, and the eastern nations: and pythagorean and platonic metaphysics, which they had entertained after they became acquainted with the Greeks, and lived under the domination of the SELEUCIDAE and the PTOLEMIES, were imported both by them, and the heathen converts, into christianity; by the hellenist Jews more than by those of Palestine, and by the heathen more than by either. Christianity began in Judaea; it derived it's authority and it's proofs from the jewish scriptures, the authenticity and divinity of which it every where supposes. The author of it was a Jew: and as the religion he instituted tended not directly to destroy judaism, so the christian church at Jerusalem conformed long, as CHRIST himself had done constantly, to the antient religion. On all these accounts, the jewish converts might regard christianity as a branch of judaism, and take the same liberties of retrenching, of adding, of altering,

altering, with one, as had been taken with the other. They had acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah foretold by their prophets. In this, they had gone beyond the Pharisees, who rejected him; as the Pharisees had gone, in receiving all the books of the Old testament, beyond the Sadducees, who received the Pentateuch, and rejected all the others. The Pharisees had added an oral to the written law. They believed the resurrection of the dead, the immortality of the soul, future rewards and punishments, the metempsychosis, and other doctrines utterly unknown to Moses; which they accommodated some how or other to his law. They made up a new system of theology by such accommodations of the law to their traditions and their philosophy. Why should not the christian Jews we speak of make up a new system, likewise, by blending all these and christianity together, as they could best reconcile them? The example of PHILO, who did not profess christianity indeed, but who found means to make the platonic opinions of the deity, and those of MOSES agree, might encourage them in the attempt.

MUCH in the same manner the pagan converts might, and certainly did proceed. They found a great analogy between the most sublime and important doctrines of christianity, and those which some of their philosophers had taught: and they might easily be led from hence to think that a sameness of doctrine denoted a sameness of au-

22 PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS. Essay 4.
thority. This will appear the more probable, if we consider that not only some heretics, but several of the most orthodox fathers, believed all those to be illuminated from above, who purified their minds, separated their souls as much as possible from their bodies, and died this philosophical death in order to arrive at a philosophical regeneration, according to the notions that metaphysical enthusiasm had established*. Thus JUSTIN the martyr makes CHRIST to have been known, in some sort, to SOCRATES†. It could not be otherwise. The soul of SOCRATES was a purified soul, and CHRIST the illuminating Word. St. AUSTIN was much of the same mind, and says little less than JUSTIN of this philosopher.

THE eclectic sect, which POTAMO founded about this time at Alexandria, might give farther occasion to the heathen converts to corrupt christianity. This sect professed a detachment from all sects, in the search of truth: they were

“ Nullius addicti jurare in verba magistri.”

They delivered themselves from the chains of philosophical bigotry. They might hold, some to one, and some to another system of philosophy in the main, as their different judgments or prejudices inclined them; but they asserted the reasonable liberty of embracing truth wherever they found it, and without any regard to the tenets

* PLATO, PLUT. JAMB. et alibi. Liberatio a corpore celebratissima mors est philosophica.

† Apol. i.

even of that sect towards which they leaned the ofteneft and the moft. SOTION paffed for a Stoic, and his fcholar SENECA professed himfelf fuch §. Yet SOTION was fond of pythagorean doctrines, and SENECA || made no fcruple of borrowing from EPICURUS. PLOTINUS was a platonician, and yet he adopted doctrines, fuch, we may prefume, efpecially, as were fubtile and myfterious, both from the Stoics and the Peripatetics. CLEMENT* was a Christian, who taught christianity by his public leffons at Alexandria, and who defended it by his writings; and yet he approved this manner of philofophifing: we may conclude too that it was the method of that fchool. AMMONIUS was the preceptor of PLOTINUS and ORIGEN. PLOTINUS deserted christianity, and bred up an inveterate enemy to it in PORPHYRY; or if he continued a Christian to the laft, as EUSEBIUS fays fomewhere that he did, for no better reason perhaps, than to keep a name of fo great renown in the christian catalogue, he dressed up his Christian with fo much pagan theology, that he might pafs for a profeflor of either. ORIGEN, on the other hand, who had heard CLEMENT, as well as AMMONIUS, was fuch a zealous Christian, that he afpired to fuffer martyrdom, like his father, and did actually execute one fort, that of castration, on himfelf; by which however he avoided another, that of temptation. ORIGEN fignalled himfelf in the eclectic method, His warm imagination carried him into allegorical and ca-

§ SENECA. ep. LVIII.

|| SENECA. paffim.

* Strom. l. i.

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balistical interpretations of the scriptures; and his immense reading furnished him with a multitude of notions borrowed from pagan theology. Many of these he introduced into christianity: and his book of principles was a repertory of the most extravagant opinions: heretical too they were declared by men less learned, less zealous perhaps, but certainly more politic, and more circumspect in observing the course that orthodoxy took, than himself.

FROM what has been said it is evident that such a motley crowd of Jews and heathens, as the first converts to christianity were, could not fail to mix a leaven of judaic and heathen theology into the christian system, and thereby to swell, to perplex, and ferment it. Had they kept closely to what the saviour taught, all this had been avoided: and, supposing christianity to have been purely an human invention, it had been the most amiable and the most useful invention, that was ever imposed on mankind for their good. But the extensions of it, and the engraftments that were made on this divine stock, by mere human philosophy, and by religious prejudices already entertained, produced a system, or rather caused divers systems to grow up, of fantastical theology. Christianity, as it came out of the hands of God, if I may use the expression, was a most simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship, and manners; which is the true notion of a religion. As soon as men presumed to add any thing of
their

their own to it, the human alloy corrupted the divine mass, and it became an object of vain, intricate, and contentious science. Such it continued to be: and the very manner, in which truth was propagated, served to establish error.

THE doctrines of christianity, and the facts that proved the divinity of it, were published by discourse, not by writing. CHRIST preached; he was the greatest of preachers, and he sent his disciples out to preach*. They pursued their mission through different countries; and as fast as they formed a church in one, they hastened to another. At least this was the practice of St. PAUL, who scattered about more spiritual seed than all the rest, and more widely. PETER was a very itinerant missionary too, if we give credit to EUSEBIUS, which I do very seldom. This writer makes him travel over a great part of Asia minor, and even to the people of Pontus; because he speaks of these nations, tho not of his preaching to them, in his first epistle. It is much more likely that he continued in Palestine and the neighbourhood, and that he never went even to Rome, whither you pretended catholics send him, that you may impose, as you have done without proof and against common sense, the ecclesiastical tyranny of the bishops of that see, his supposed successors, on the christian world. PAUL indeed was a great traveller, as I have said,

* Summus ille ecclesiastes. — Verbum et Sermo Dei. ERAS. De rat. concion.

moving about from place to place almost continually during the greatest part of the time that passed between his baptism and his death; that is, according to the calculation of ERASMUS, thirty five years. He went over the countries, where PETER taught, more than once. He had been in Arabia before. He visited Greece and most of the islands. He penetrated beyond Thracia and Macedonia into Illyria. He returned into Palestine, and was sent in chains from thence to Rome.

How these two apostles preached, for of the rest we have no need to speak, and should have little to say, may be seen by their public discourses recorded in the Acts, and might be guessed by the style and matter of their epistles. To shew how they succeeded in their missions, one example will be sufficient. PAUL had preached eighteen months or two years at Corinth, and had settled a church there. The Corinthians did not renounce christianity as soon as he had left them; but they corrupted it both in opinion and practice, and fell back into all their former habits of vice and debauchery. It was, on this occasion, that the apostle writ his two epistles to the Corinthians, and in them we see the particular errors and abuses that were grown in a short time to a great head in that city. Among these it is to our present purpose to mention some. The taint of heathen philosophy remained upon them; and they had contracted a gnostical contempt for the simplicity of the gospel, and of evangelical teachers.

False

False apostles from Judaea had introduced superstitious opinions and practices, and had persuaded them to regard the law of MOSES as necessary to be observed with that of CHRIST. They were divided into sects, and affected pre-eminence according to the dignity they ascribed to those by whom they had been baptised, to APOLLOS, to CEPHAS, to PAUL. For these, and for many other things, they are severely reprov'd in the first of the two epistles I have mentioned: and tho St. PAUL seems satisfied in the second with their submission and amendment, yet is it certain that the same errors and abuses continued or revived in the church of Corinth, and in others. JEROM* says in general, that even in his time the remains of them appeared in Achaia: and St. AUSTIN†, taking notice in particular of the superstitious washings of the feet, laments that the church of CHRIST was subjected to more than judaical servitude under the load of external observances.

It was easy to intermix, in this manner of promulgating the gospel, as many philosophical and pharisaical conceits, as the prejudices or purposes of the several preachers of it required: and when they were once well mingled together, as tradition varied those of one sort, or multiplied those of another, public writings and ecclesiastical authority were added to increase and perpetuate the confusion in which christianity was delivered

* Praefat. ii^{di}. lib. Com. in ep. ad Galatas.

† Ep. ad JANUARIUM.

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down to posterity, and in which it continues even
at this day: a state not to be quite paralleled by
that of any other religion, as I believe; neither by
the mahometan, however divided, nor by that of
FOE, into how many sects soever it has been
broken among the eastern nations. But we
must not imagine that the diversity of sects,
and the opposition and confusion of doctrines,
which were principal, were sole causes of the un-
certainty of the traditions of the primitive church,
or were caused solely by the manner of promulgat-
ing christianity. Other causes of this division and
confusion existed and concurred, either mediately
through them, or by their own immediate effects,
to corrupt tradition, and hinder the christian system
from acquiring any appearance of consistency.

SECTION XIX.

TO collect instances of all the extravagancies
which were broached at that time, which al-
most choaked the tender shoots of christianity, and
which grew up with them, like weeds among the
corn, would be endless and needless both. I will
recal one alone of the enthusiasm that prevailed,
and of the impudence with which some men im-
posed on the simplicity of others. We find it in
PAUL's second epistle to the Corinthians. The
effect of his first, whatever that was, encouraged
him to write in this more plainly and more bitterly
against the false teachers, and more highly in praise
of himself, his authority, and his merit, which he
scruples

scruples not to prefer to that of all the other apostles. On this occasion it appears that the false teachers had the front to assure, and to make the first christian converts believe, that they had an immediate communication with celestial beings. This gave them an air of superiority to which St. PAUL thought it not proper to submit, as indeed it was not, since that would have been to submit his authority to theirs, and the gospel he taught to the gospels they taught. The least he could do, and it is observable that his modesty would allow him to do no more, was to oppose his own raptures and visions to those which these men pretended to have, and to declare that he too had been rapt up into the third heaven, either in body, or spirit, where he had learned things incomprehensible and ineffable.

WHAT has been said very summarily may serve, however, to shew that it was not possible, traditions derived from the first, and through the most early ages of christianity, should convey either facts or doctrines down with a due authenticity and precision, unless a continued miracle had subsisted to alter the nature of things, and to produce effects repugnant to their causes. But there remain some circumstances still, which deserve to be mentioned. It has been observed already that the fondness of the first Christians for pagan theology carried them not only to borrow from it, but to forge books under the names of such as had been famous divines in the east, in Egypt, and elsewhere.

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elsewhere. Even this did not content them. They not only introduced, with equal absurdity and falshood, these authorities to confirm the most sublime mysteries of christianity, and to teach men the way to salvation *, but they composed a multitude of different gospels, not less, I believe, than forty, to give the authority of a divine original to all the fabulous traditions, superstitious practices, and extravagant doctrines, which were adopted, or invented by the different sects. Thus the Gnostics had their gospel; the Marcionites had theirs; the Valentinians had theirs, and even JUDAS ISCARIOT had his †. Apocalypses, or books of revelations, were not so numerous; but of these too there were several. One of these particularly, the apocalypse of St. PAUL, I could almost wish that we had, since it pretended to relate the ineffable things he saw in the third heaven. But it is lost as well as others: and if that which we have under the name of St. JOHN had been lost likewise, there might have been some madmen the fewer, and christianity would not have suffered so much.

THERE was another practice in the primitive church, which may find its place properly enough here, because it served to corrupt the traditions of the church, and to fill the ecclesiastical annals with lying legends; tho it did not corrupt the doctrines of christianity so directly as the others. The practice I mean is that of writing pious ro-

* Via ad salutem — indicata.

† Cod. apoc. Nov. testam. of FABRICIUS.

mances,

mances, under the pretence of writing the lives of
 saints, and the deaths of martyrs. This practice
 grew so frequent, and these romances were held in
 such esteem, that a certain ecclesiastic of the greek
 church, one METAPHRASTUS *, I think, published
 a treatise of criticism on the subject, and laid down
 rules for the composition of them. Christian histo-
 rians, like those of Greece who wrote after the ex-
 pedition of ALEXANDER, imagined they could ne-
 ver add too much of the marvellous to so many
 marvellous events. Their readers seemed to be of
 the same mind: and history became romance in
 order to please. These histories too of saints and
 martyrs were panegyrics, as well as romances, and
 had the same effect that TULLY ascribes somewhere
 to the funeral orations of the Romans, which cor-
 rupted tradition first, and history afterwards. Well
 might they have this effect, when they were autho-
 rised by the greatest and most admired fathers of
 the church; when such a man as St. AUSTIN, for
 instance, read such legends in the pulpit to his con-
 gregation, and kept and published accounts of mi-
 racles wrought by the relics of saints and martyrs.
 Since the preachers propagated these idle tales, it
 is not wonderful that the hearers believed them,
 and that pious lying became the voice of tradition,
 in ages when any thing might be imposed on
 christian auditories, and that which was least un-
 derstood was most admired in them, according to
 the character given of these flocks by St. GREGORY
 of Nazianzum in a very remarkable anecdote re-

* Vid. BAILETT'S Pref. to the Lives of the saints.

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lated by St. JEROM *. But these romances had
an effect still worse; for they introduced into
christianity a sort of polytheism and idolatry, too
nearly akin to heathenism. Let not your zeal for
the honor of saints, martyrs, and confessors make
you think the expression too hard. I can quote
you one much more hard from ERASMUS, for
whom you profess the same veneration that I have.
In the preface to DE MARCA, before his Paraphrase
on St. PAUL's epistles to the Corinthians, after say-
ing that "this apostle did not suffer any mortal to
" be cried or preached up, nor the praise of the
" gospel to be transferred to men," he adds,
" nunc quidem, velut antiquato CHRISTO, novum
" idololatriæ genus invehunt, ex hominibus, ut
" ita loquar, deos facientes." The church, your
church I mean, has ascribed divinity little if at all
better, than the heathen did. Some of your saints,
tho they were not public debauchees, were very ill
men: and if you consult CYPRIAN, whose autho-
rity is so much respected, and for the same reason,
by the christian clergy of every sect, you will find
that they who suffered as confessors were very often
men of the most profligate morals. If they were
such after their sufferings, there is room to believe
that some of the martyrs were such before they
suffered, and when they suffered.

No monuments can be more uncertain, none
more precarious, than those of christian tradition.
Other traditions grow more and more so by time.

* Ep. ad NEPOTIAN.

These were never more so than at first. Ask your acquaintance doctor WATERLAND, whether he has found the tradition of the three first ages of the church direct, clear, and uniform in support of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father; which is a doctrine that he defends most strenuously. He will assure you that he has found it to be so. He will not to be able, however, to prove it any more, than bishop BULL has done, after all his boasts of the unanimity of the fathers, and even with the help of forced constructions, and indirect proofs. As little will he or any other divine be able to defend, on this authority, several doctrines, that they hold, or to justify themselves for not holding several that they reject. Even your divines, who lay so much stress on tradition, are pleased to abandon it, as well as ours, in cases wherein it seems to carry the greatest authority, because it is immediately derived from the apostles. Thus, I believe, that abstinence from blood, which was enjoined as much as abstinence from fornication by the apostles in a solemn council, is at this time required by no doctor, except doctor DELANY. Thus again there are, I suppose, very few millenarians left, if even Mr. WHISTON be still of the same opinion, tho the year one thousand seven hundred and twenty is past, and the millennium not begun. In short, by partial traditions they can prove or disprove any thing; by universal traditions almost nothing. This very doctrine of a millennium was opposed at the close of the se-

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cond century*: and a certain priest, one CAIUS,
who believed that the apocalypse ascribed to St.
JOHN was writ by CERINTHUS, ascribed this opi-
nion not to the evangelist, but to the heretic.
JEROM, AUSTIN, GREGORY the great, or the saint
as he is called with less reason, and divines much
more modern than these, have interpreted the pas-
sages of the apocalypse, that establish the millen-
nium, in another sense: and a man, who should
profess to expect it at this day, or to believe the
doctrine, would be treated as a visionary. But
yet we must, I think, receive this tradition, so ge-
nerally rejected; or reject all traditions, even those
as generally received.

LET me say something more, which occurs to
me on the subject of the millennium. IRENAEUS
is a father much quoted and much respected.
IRENAEUS had seen PAPIAS and POLYCARP, and
was himself a disciple of the disciples of St. JOHN.
All these were millennarians: and thus the first au-
thors of apostolical traditions taught this doctrine
as apostolical. JUSTIN the martyr, and TERTUL-
LIAN, were millennarians likewise. JUSTIN was
the first father, I believe, who took notice of the
apocalypse, ascribed it to St. JOHN, and founded
his belief of the millennium upon it, in the dia-
logue with TRYPHON. TERTULLIAN goes far-
ther. He maintains the apocalypse against the
Marcionites; and affirms that the new Jerusalem,
to be built by the hand of God, and to descend

* EUSEB. Hist. eccles. lib. iii.

from heaven, was known to EZEKIEL, and had been seen by the apostle St. JOHN; nay, that the plan, or model of it, had been seen in his time suspended in the air forty days together, that it might be known again, when it should actually exist on the earth. Let it not be said that I insist on the authorities of a weak man, and of a mad-man. I might do so, in this case, with as good reason, as divines have for insisting on them in so many others. But the point I insist upon is this. The doctrine of the millennium was an apostolical doctrine, and taught as such by the immediate successors of the apostles. It was opposed, indeed, near two centuries afterwards, by an obscure priest, who denied it to be the doctrine of St. JOHN, because he denied St. JOHN to be the author of the apocalypse. But the doctrine was founded on original tradition, as well as on the apocalypse: and therefore, whatever interpretations were made of these revelations in after-times, the tradition was too fresh to be shaken. What shall we say now? Were the traditions concerning the millennium of doubtful authority in the first ages of the church? In that case, tradition is no rule at all. Were they uniform? How comes this doctrine to be exploded?

THE third and fourth ways, that is the two worst, of preserving doctrines, which BARROW mentions, have so near a relation to one another, that one is the necessary consequence of the other. They, who decide about disputable and disputed facts or doctrines, at great distances of time, may

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may be easily imposed upon by tradition, and may easily impose by authority. Tradition is all that time growing corrupt. If it become false, they decide and they write falsely; if uncertain, uncertainly. The nicean council decided against ARIUS: and yet, if we give credit to PETAVIUS, whom it was more easy to silence by authority, than to refute by fact and by reason, the fathers of the three first centuries were little better than Arians. How came the fathers of the fourth to decree so positively and so precisely in favor of a consubstantiality, about which the tradition had been neither positive, precise, nor unanimous; tho bishop BULL has ventured to assert, that the antenicean fathers had agreed on this subject “ad unum?” Could any man, who had not the front of a controversial writer, affirm in this manner, when he knew, as BULL knew, that eighty fathers who condemned PAUL of Samosata, denied the homoussion or consubstantiality of the Son with the Father?

WILL it be urged, that the four gospels are as old, and even older than tradition; that the orthodox doctrine concerning the trinity is established in them, and in the other scriptures of the New testament, by all which tradition is to be controlled and corrected? I apprehend that the answer will not be sufficient. Some will assert that the scriptures, far from establishing the nicean doctrine, vindicate, by their whole tenor, the supremacy of the Father, and declare the subordi-
nation

nation of the Son. But let it be that the gospels received into the canon are favorable to the orthodox belief; how do we know that the other gospels were exactly conformable to these, on a matter of so much nice definition? Might not our learned and subtle theology find the task infinitely harder, if we had those gospels, to create an harmony between three or four dozen, than between four? The council of Laodicea admitted four, and rejected all the rest. But it is very possible that this council might proceed, as councils have generally done, under the influence of an ecclesiastical faction, and decree accordingly; or else on some such reasons as IRENAEUS called a demonstration*. “There are four parts of the world. “There are four cardinal winds. There have been “four covenants, under ADAM, NOAH, MOSES, and “CHRIST. There can be but four gospels therefore.” I omit some other proofs, just as demonstrative as these, upon all of which he did, and the council might, determine that there could be neither more nor less than four gospels; tho several traditions authorised several others.

THE truth is, that as every man, in the most early days of christianity, judged of his own inspiration, and of the gifts of the Spirit he received, so every church judged of the inspiration of authors, and of the divine authority of books. The first led to the last, and those authors were deemed inspired, and those books were canonised, in which

* Lib. iii.

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every particular church found the greatest conformity with her own sentiments. It is astonishing to consider how far this extravagance was carried. To consider, for instance, that CLEMENT of Alexandria should look on an apocalypse of PETER as genuine, and it should be rejected afterwards. That St. PAUL should insert in his epistles several passages of the apocalypse of ELIAS, as ORIGEN assures that he did, and it should be refused admittance into the canon. But it is still more astonishing to observe how much respect ORIGEN himself had for the visions of HERMAS, and the oracles of the SIBYL, as well as others of the fathers. IRENAEUS, having cited the former, uses this expression, “scriptura pronunciavit* :” and honest JUSTIN, in his Admonition to the Greeks, exhorts them in a most solemn manner to believe the antient and venerable SIBYL, who was extraordinarily inspired “by almighty God.”

I CONCLUDE from the little that has been said on a most voluminous subject, that as tradition furnishes very precarious anecdotes to those who write at great distances of time, so it may become difficult, nay impossible, to ascertain the authority even of books that were written, perhaps, at the time they suppose themselves to have been written, if the attempt to fix their authenticity, and to reduce them into a canon, is made at a great distance of time. They may be neither received nor rejected on grounds absolutely sure. They may be

* Lib. iv.

rejected at one time, and received at another: a remarkable example of which we find in the adventures of the apocalypse. Whether this book was writ by JOHN the evangelist, JOHN the priest, CERINTHUS, or some other visionary, it passed for a composition of the evangelist's, and maintained great credit as such in the church for some centuries before the council of Laodicea. This council left it out of the canon in the year three hundred and sixty: and altho asiatic bishops might pass, in this case, for judges more competent than those of the west, the council of Carthage put it into the canon in the year three hundred and ninety seven. Some spanish councils, and others, I believe, in the west did the same. Anathema, that convincing argument, was employed against all gainfayers: and as the mist thickened, it was universally admitted into the canon of the New testament.

To sum up the whole in one short proposition: Ecclesiastical tradition has been, from the first and purest ages, founded, for the most part, in ignorance, superstition, enthusiasm, and fraud. He who pretends to clear the reverend fathers, by whom tradition was principally conveyed down from age to age, and to deny this charge, must be very ignorant himself, or very impudent. Sometimes they shew their learning, like JUSTIN, who took the inscription SEMONI DEO SANCTO, on the statue of a god of the Sabines, for an inscription on the statue of SIMON the magician. Sometimes their logic, and the strength of their reasoning ta-

lents are extremely like to those of IRENAEUS in his famous demonstration of the necessity of four gospels. Sometimes they are as sober as CYPRIAN, who rehearsed to his church in the morning the visions and dreams he had in the night, and who consulted little children in their extasies, when he had none of these himself*. Sometimes they are

as
* As extraordinary as this may seem, it will not surprise those who have read the confession, ascribed to him, and published among his works in the benedictine edition of them. The great St. CYPRIAN, for so our divines, as well as yours, affect to call him, had been a rhetorician before his conversion, and was after it an admirer of his countryman, TERTULLIAN, whom he called his master, and some portion of whose works he used to read every day, according to an anecdote mentioned by St. JEROM^a. Now since he formed his style on this model, and on the taste of his age, we may well expect to find, what is found in his writings, much hyperbole, much spiritual bombast, and all the flowers of false eloquence. We find them very eminently in that extraordinary piece, his confession. There he gives an account of his education, of his initiation into all the mysteries of paganism, and of his admission into all the secrets of the blackest and most diabolical magic. Believe me, says the saint, I saw the devil himself; believe me, I embraced him, I conversed with him, and was esteemed one of those who held a principal rank about him. He adds, that the devil made him many compliments and promises, gave him a band of infernal spirits to command, and at the end of this first visit arose from his throne, and accompanied the young JAMBRES with a politeness that surprised all those who saw it. He describes his person, his dress, and the spirits that attended his court in material forms, with which they were supplied by the steams of sacrifices. He describes afterwards the wonderful feats he performed, whilst he was a magician, and all the abominations of which he was guilty. But finding at last that the devil, and all the powers of hell had not been able to debauch JUSTINA, a christian virgin, for whom his friend AG-

^a Lib. De scrip. ecclesiast.

as sagacious as AMBROSE, who had visions and dreams too, and who had besides them the faculty of

LAIIDAS had a strong inclination, and whom CYPRIAN himself seems to have liked very much, he renounced the devil and all his works. — He set him even at defiance. You tremble, said the saint, at the name of CHRIST: the sign of his cross deprives you of all power: how would you stand his presence? Thus the devil was put to confusion. But CYPRIAN fell into despair, till his friend, EUSEBIUS, comforted him, carried him to the bishop, and made him not only a Christian, but one of the greatest lights of the church.

SOME divines would find, in all this, no reason to object to CYPRIAN'S authority. On the contrary, they would exalt this confession, and the public shame which the penitent took to himself, as an illustrious proof of the sincerity of his conversion. Such divines might, perhaps, go farther, and shew, by way of corollary, not only against the Novatians, that Christians who had apostatised might be received to repentance, but also that the most wicked of Pagans might become a saint. They would not, however, be able to solve this dilemma: "Either CYPRIAN believed what he reported to be true, or he knew it to be false. If he believed it true, he was a madman. If he knew it to be false, he was a liar; and neither in one character, nor in the other, a fit pastor for the flock of CHRIST."

OTHER divines, both of your church and of mine, are very unwilling to own that this confession is CYPRIAN'S. They would gladly father it on some other person, no matter on whom. His writings do not only give, like those of the other fathers, a seeming authority to many of the doctrines that they teach; but he was in particular a zealous assertor of the dignity and power of bishops, and of the whole ecclesiastical order. The papists, indeed, have most use for this father: and his book *De unitate ecclesiae* alone, nay, one single passage of it would suffice to make him a favorite in the church of Rome. The passage I mean is that, wherein, after he has quoted the words of CHRIST to PETER^a, tho he acknowledges

^a MAT. C. XVI.

that

of distinguishing the relics of saints and martyrs by certain emotions that they caused in him.

10

Some-

that all the apostles received the same powers, he adds^b, “*ta-*
“*men ut unitatem manifestaret, unitatis ejusdem originem ab*
“*uno incipientem sua auctoritate disposuit—sed exordium*
“*ab unitate proficiscitur, et primatus PETRO datur, ut una*
“*CHRISTI ecclesia, et cathedra una monstretur.*” The reputation of such a witness in favor of papal primacy, and episcopal authority, in the middle of the third century, is to be supported at any rate; and by consequence this piece is not to be ascribed to him, if the priesthood can hinder it by opposing the most improbable, to the most probable reasons.

We know nothing of the man till he became a Christian. St. Austin^c indeed speaks of him, as if he had read his confession. “*Mutatus est CYPRIANUS,*” says this saint of his countryman, “*cujus hodie memoriam frequentamus—Ipsē*
“*scribit, ipse testatur cujus vitae fuerit aliquando, quam nefariae,*
“*quam impiae, quam improbandae, ac detestandae.*” The author of the confession could almost alone deserve such epithets; and it is extremely probable that PONTIUS, a prudent deacon, and the antient biographer of CYPRIAN, passed over in silence all that preceded his conversion, as if it had been unworthy to be mentioned, but in truth that he might not be obliged to say any thing of this important confession. His modern biographer, a benedictine monk, who published the edition of CYPRIAN’s works, which BALUZIUS had begun, is not so easily embarrassed. He pretends that there were two CYPRIANS, the great St. CYPRIAN of Carthage, and a little St. CYPRIAN of Antioch, whose name is likewise preserved in ecclesiastical monuments. He insists on a poem, which PHOTIUS reports that the empress EUDOCIA wrote about a CYPRIAN and a JUSTINA who suffered martyrdom at Nicomedia, and which contained many things that are imputed to the CYPRIAN we speak of by St. GREGORY of Nazianzum in his eighteenth sermon, tho they could not belong to him. On this foundation the monk assumes that St. GREGORY confounded the antiochian with the carthaginian CYPRIAN, and did

^b JON. c. xx.

^c Serm. 311.

Sometimes they are as cautious and exact in their reports of miracles, as AUSTIN was, who says on that important question, whether St. JOHN died or not; “that the people of Ephesus, men of sense, “and not light of belief, had assured him that “the saint was buried in their town; but that he “lay in his grave like one who sleeps in his bed, “and that the earth which covered him rose and “funk, as the bed-clothes do over one who sleeps “and breathes.” To conclude, they were sometimes as sincere and honest as JEROM. The sincerity of this great doctor may be seen in this instance. He pretended that angels had scourged him severely for his attachment to profane authors; and to shew that he had not dreamed it, he appealed to the marks that remained on his back *. His honesty may be seen in this. The fathers

not know on whose festival he preached. Our learned FELL had objected that no one of this name is to be found among the bishops of Antioch: no wonder, says the learned benedictine, for as there were two CYPRIANS, there were two Antiochs, the great Antioch so famous in history, and a little private Antioch concealed in Phoenicia, and scarce heard of in any public records. It seemed incredible to FELL that St. GREGORY, who had been so well instructed in ecclesiastical affairs by his pious father, and who had been at Nicomedia and in the neighbouring country, should know nothing of this antiochian CYPRIAN, but apply the whole of this confession to the carthaginian. It will avail little, I suppose, to affirm that GREGORY was come newly to Constantinople, and that he preached without sufficient preparation and information: so that I may continue to believe, as I do believe, it more probable that these critics go about to deceive us, than that St. GREGORY was deceived himself, and imposed on his auditory.

* Ep. ad EUSTOCHIUM.

were apt to employ, like rhetors, false reasons and false authorities. JEROM commends the practice, avows it, and gives rules for it. Nay he makes PETER and PAUL guilty of it in their famous dispute, which gave occasion to another between him and the bishop of Hippo.

IF we were obliged to search for the articles and grounds of faith, and for the measures of obedience, in this mystery of folly and iniquity; if we were to collect our christianity from dark passages of scripture, that admit often of no sense, and often of several, and that are rendered more uncertain and obscure by ecclesiastical traditions, and by such divines as have been mentioned, our case would be bad indeed. But such an absurdity cannot be in the order of an all-wise providence. God has dealt more graciously with his creatures. The kingdom of theology is the kingdom of darkness: and to enjoy the true light of the gospel, we must fly from it. To believe that JESUS was the Messiah is said by some to be the “unum necessarium” of faith; but to observe the laws of nature is certainly the “unum necessarium” of duty. About this summary of faith and duty there can be no very reasonable doubt. Scripture, tradition, and theology all conspire to establish them; altho the two last endeavour to add to them, and to perplex them.

SECTION XX.

BUT it is time we should proceed to the last cause I assigned of the multiplication of sects, and the confusion of doctrines, which have rendered theology the corruption of religion and the bane of society, by the abuse which a distinct order of men has made of religion to acquire dominion over private conscience, and, by that spiritual, a great share of temporal, dominion in every christian state. With this I shall conclude all I have to say concerning authority in matters of religion, and shall plead the cause of it successfully, I hope, against those infidels who charge it unjustly.

THAT religion is necessary to strengthen, and that it contributes to support government cannot be denied, I think, without contradicting reason and experience both. This some men have been extravagant enough to do directly: whilst others, with whom alone we shall meddle here, have contradicted reason and experience just as much, in a manner more likely to impose, and therefore more likely to do hurt, by propagating false conceptions of the Supreme Being, by perplexing the notions of religion, and by associating to it such as are really distinct from it. From hence all the evil consequences, that are imputed to religion, have flowed immediately: and it is necessary, therefore, in defence of it, to distinguish clearly

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between

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between what is really religion, and what has been
industriously, and is now habitually, confounded
with it, and made to pass for it.

CIVIL obligations are imposed by the laws of man ; religious obligations by those of God ; and as the authority of the legislator is far greater in one case than in the other, so is the sanction of the law, eternal punishments in another life, instead of temporal pains and penalties in this. If it be said that, besides this difference, we are to consider how much religion has a farther influence than civil government can have, because the former reaches to the inward dispositions of the heart and mind, whilst the other goes no farther than to regulate outward conduct ; I shall neither deny the proposition, nor admit all the use that is made of it : but I shall conclude from thence, how necessary it is to the peace and welfare of mankind, that they be kept from jarring, which cannot be effectually prevented, unless the entire power of both remains in the same hands. As long as natural religion is alone concerned, this should not seem so difficult ; but when revealed religions are established, the difficulty becomes almost insuperable. The principles and duties of natural religion arise from the nature of things, and are discovered by the reason of man, according to that order which the author of all nature, and the giver of all reason, has established in the human system. From hence too would arise the institutions of civil government in a natural state,

state, if the minds of legislators were not corrupted previously by superstition. In these cases, religion and civil government arising from the same spring, their waters would be intermixed, they would run in one stream, and they might be easily confined to the same channel, if revelation did not introduce mysterious doctrines and rites, which it becomes soon a trade to teach and to celebrate.

NEITHER nature, nor reason, could ever lead men to imagine two distinct and independent societies in the same society. This imagination was broached by ecclesiastical ambition; and when it was once broached, it was sure to be propagated by the self-interest of a whole order of men in every country, and by the superstition of all the rest. A respect for religion begat a respect for this order. The idea of religion came to be associated to that of church, or rather to be confounded with it: and church came to signify this order of men even exclusively. This church, this religious society, grew up in some countries to be the tyrant, in others to be the rival of the state, on the authority of pretended revelations among the heathens: and it is a melancholy truth, that the same monstrous growth has been seen and felt, on the pretended authority of real revelations, among Christians. Such is the knavery and such the folly of mankind that no example, antient or modern, pagan or christian, can be produced of such an order of men once established, that has

not aimed at acquiring from their institution, and that has not acquired, sooner or later, immoderate wealth and exorbitant power.

Few men are so little acquainted with the history of the christian world, as not to know that the wealth of this church is equal, at least in many countries, to that of the egyptian church; that the influence of the antient could not be greater than that of the modern magi over all ranks of men; and that the bishop of Rome has exercised, even over kings in many countries, a power, which he claimed in all, of the same nature with that of the ethiopian church over kings of one country.

A RELIGIOUS society, by which is meant, on this occasion, a clergy, is, or is not the creature of the state. If the first, it follows that this order, no more than others, which the state has instituted for the maintenance of good government, can assume any rights, or exercise any powers, except such as the state has thought fit to attribute to it; and that the state may, and ought to keep a constant control over it, not only to prevent usurpations and abuses, but to direct the public and private influence of the clergy in a strict conformity to the letter and spirit of that constitution, the servants of which in a much truer sense they are, than, what they affect sometimes to call themselves, the ambassadors of God to other men. If the last is said, if it is asserted that the church

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is in any sort independent on the state, there arises from this pretension the greatest absurdity imaginable, that I mean of imperium in imperio: an empire of divine in an empire of human institution. It is in truth so expressly contained in the very terms of the assertion, that none of the tedious sophistical reasonings, which have been employed for the purpose, can evade or disguise it.

ONE of these I will mention, because it has a certain air of plausibility, that imposes on many, and because, if it cannot stand a short and fair examination, as I think it cannot, the whole edifice of ecclesiastical independency and grandeur falls to the ground. It has been said then, that religious and civil societies are widely distinguished by the distinct ends of their institutions, which imply necessarily distinct powers and a mutual independency; that the end of one is the salvation of souls, and that of the other the security of temporal interests; that the state punishes overt acts, and can punish nothing else, because it can have cognisance of nothing that passes in the mind and does not break out into criminal actions; but that the church, employing her influence to temper the passions, to regulate the inward dispositions, and to prevent sins, as well as crimes, is that tribunal at which even intentions are to be tried, and sins, that do not ripen into crimes, nor immediately affect civil society, are to be punished.

Now in answer to all this we may deny, with truth and reason on our side, that the avowed ends of religious, and the real ends of civil societies, are so distinct as to require distinct powers, and a mutual independency. The salvation of souls is not the immediate end of civil government: and I wish it was not rather the pretence than the end of ecclesiastical policy. But if to abstain from evil, and to do good works, be means of salvation, the means of salvation are objects of civil government. It is the duty of princes and magistrates to promote a strict observation of the law of nature, of private and public morality, and to make those who live in subjection to them good men, in order to make them good citizens. For this purpose, the balance and the sword are put into their hands, that they may measure out punishment to every one who injures the community, or does wrong to his neighbour: and a rigorous punishment of crimes, especially if it be accompanied with rewards and encouragements to virtue, for both are entrusted to the same men, is the surest way, not only to reform the outward behaviour, but to create an habitual inward disposition to the practice of religion.

A CLERGY might co-operate with the civil magistrates, very usefully no doubt, by exhortations and reproofs, whereof they are seldom sparing, and much more by example, which can alone give efficacy to the former, and which is not, however,

ver, very frequently employed. This they might do as assistants to the civil magistrate, in concert with him, and in subordination to him. To what purpose, therefore, do they claim and affect independency on him? Greater power never did, nor can enable them to do greater good. On the contrary, it always has, and always must divert them from the proper business of their profession, create scandalous strife with the civil power, and embarrass the whole order of government. Would they erect a tribunal to punish intentions? The very pretence is impertinent. Would they erect it to punish, where no injury is offered, nor wrong done? The design is unjust and arbitrary. The ideas of crimes are determinate and fixed. The magistrate cannot alter them. The ideas of sins are more confused and vague; and we know by long and general experience how they vary in the minds, or at least in the writings of casuists. Would they erect such a tribunal to try the orthodoxy of men's faith? Such an one is erected in some countries, under the name of the inquisition, and is justly detested in all. A tribunal, with all the powers of the inquisition, may extirpate heresy, or rather propagate hypocrisy, by the most abominable species of tyranny. A tribunal of this sort, that has powers less coercive, may tease, and vex, and irritate mankind. It may multiply sects, render them more obstinate by persecution, and bring all those evils on the world which atheists object to religion: but the former can never procure a real, nor the latter

even an apparent uniformity. To what end and purpose then can spiritual courts, and coercive powers attributed to the clergy, serve, unless it be to make them judges and parties in their own cause, when matters of interest are concerned?

SECTION XXI.

I INSIST on this point the more, not only because it leads directly to what I shall have occasion to say in the latter part of this essay, but because I would take off the mask of ecclesiastical ambition, which even some of our own divines put on. Those of your church have laid it aside long ago, and contend openly for ecclesiastical tyranny. The principal difference among them seems to be, whether this tyranny shall be that of a monarchy, or of an aristocracy. Honest LAUD went as far, at least, as the most moderate of yours, and was frank enough to own his principles and aims. The several revolutions that have happened in our church and state have rendered the first too unpopular, to be directly avowed; and the latter too visibly impracticable, to be entertained. The bait, however, is tempting, and therefore even they nibble at it, who fear the hook. What they are not suffered to attempt in practice, they maintain in speculation: they insinuate principles, which may serve to re-establish ecclesiastical power and independency on the state, in some more happy conjuncture; and they do all this safely whilst
seeming

seeming modifications, and ambiguous expressions, hinder most men from discerning the consequences of what they advance, and some even from knowing again in their writings the same doctrines that they had condemned in the writings of others.

AMONG all the fallacies which have been employed by churchmen, who have thought it necessary to soften the absurdity, and to anticipate objections, one of the most absurd has been advanced, tho not invented, by a paradoxical acquaintance of yours ; and it is, to maintain the independency of the church, and to suppose, at the same time, a sort of original contract between the church and the state, the terms of which every whimsical writer, even this scribler, adjusts as he pleases. They who contend for absolute monarchy in the state endeavour to explode the notion of an original contract between the prince and the people, because the terms of it are easy to be ascertained. They know, those of them at least, who are not as mad as FILMER, know, that all the rights and powers, which a prince can have, must be derived originally from the people. They know, therefore, that the terms of such a contract, generally made, and always implied, may be sufficiently ascertained by reason, by law, and by custom, notwithstanding any previous and divine right, which it may be supposed that princes have to govern. They know too that the whole body of the people, and no particular order of men, are to judge of the observation of

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this contract. But they who contend for the independency of the church on the state are ready to assume such a contract, because the pretence may serve to delude the state, in some countries, and can never embarrass the church in any. By admitting it, the state acknowledges an original independency in the church, derived from a greater authority than her own : and the supposed terms of union may be construed to be rather concessions of the religious society to the civil, for the sake of order and peace, than grants of the civil to the religious society. Thus religion and the church are set on the same foot : no human authority can alter one, but must receive it in the terms in which it has been revealed : and so may a good casuist prove, on this hypothesis, that no human authority can measure out any conditions of establishment to the other. Thus the state becomes nothing better than a co-ordinate, but inferior power.

THE stupid fellow, who advanced this paradox in english, did not see how ill the parts of it hang together ; nor that, if ecclesiastical government was, by divine appointment, independent of civil, no such contract, as he supposes, could be made. The religious society, notwithstanding their known moderation, could not have departed from that independency and superiority over the civil power, which God had given them. But the truth is, they were glad to get an establishment in the empire at any rate : and when a fortunate

fortunate conjuncture had made one emperor think that they might be of use to him, it happened, as it often has happened, that the auxiliaries usurped on him, or his successors at least, on the prerogatives of the crown, and on the liberties of the people. In short, if there had been any alliance between the church and the state on this occasion, it must have been such an alliance as never was heard of before nor since. It must have been an alliance without any treaty, for there certainly was none: and all the advantages, which the religious society acquired afterwards over the civil, were mere usurpations: for usurpations by fraud are as really such, as usurpations by force; and these were carried as far as legislative authority.

THE church advocates beyond the Alps may be a little more impudent, but they are much more consistent, than some on this side. That voluminous compilation of decrees of councils and of popes, of resolutions of fathers, of apostolical constitutions, and of other ecclesiastical authorities, composes a body of law, according to them, which the church had a right to enact without the concurrence of the state, and which is, however, obligatory on the state, and on every member of the state, as far as they are concerned in it. This, I say, is impudent; but it is consistent with the notion of a religious society of divine institution, and therefore independent; and may be easily defended on that principle. But where we shall look for the conditions of that

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original contract, which was made between the religious and the civil society, I know not; unless we suppose them written on the back of CONSTANTINE'S grant to SYLVESTER, and preserved in that grand repertory of forgeries, the records of the roman church. We shall not find them in the canon law. The French, as good papists as they are, admit this in part only: and the quarrel between PHILIP LE BEL and BONIFACE the eighth may be said to subsist even now. We, who have shook off the roman yoke entirely, admit still less of this ecclesiastical code; for we reject every thing in it, that is not conformable to the law of the state, and to the doctrines of the church which this law has established.

THIS imaginary contract, in short, whether well or ill made, never existed, at any time, nor in any country; tho, to have been real, and really authoris'd, it should have been the same at all times, and in all countries, where christianity was propagated. Political societies make, and alter, and break their alliances, as the varying reason of state suggests. Different orders of civil government, in the same society, change, and with them the whole constitution of such governments, as reason or passion, the interests or dispositions, of men determine them. But a religion given by God is in it's nature invariable: and therefore, if a religious society, with certain privileges, immunities, and prerogatives, be necessary to preserve it so, the order and constitution of such

such a society must be invariable too. The church must be established by the same divine authority as the religion, and be by consequence independent on the state. But nothing of this kind has been. CHRIST's kingdom was not of this world. He sent out his apostles to teach and to baptise; and the utmost power he gave them, besides that of working miracles to convince and to convert, was to shake off the dust of their feet, and to protest against the infidelity of those, who refused to receive them and the gospel they published. The apostles ordained others to accompany and to succeed them in the same office, the office of teaching and baptising. The apostles could give no more power than they received; and no argument of right can be drawn from any thing that passed, nor from any thing that these men did for the maintenance of their sect, whilst christianity was a sect. As little argument of right, or of independency, can be drawn from the impolitic indulgence of civil governments, that, embracing the religion, admitted the teachers of it into a legal establishment, with all the extraordinary powers they had enjoyed whilst they were leaders and heads of a sect. I call it indulgence, because the religious society had no original right to any such powers; because the sect could not prescribe in such cases to the state; and because they were not admitted by any treaty, but by the goodwill and sole authority of the civil government. I call this indulgence impolitic, because it encouraged ecclesiastical ambition, laid the foundation of all the usurpations

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pations of the church on the state, destroyed the effect of religion by theology, and made even christianity a grievance, as will be shewn immediately.

SECTION XXII.

CHRISTIANITY had not been established many centuries in the west, before a claim to universal property was set on foot in favor of the faithful, that is of Christians; nor before the bishop of Rome claimed universal empire, not only over the religious, but over all civil societies. St. AUSTIN shall vouch for what I advance here on the first head: and what I say on the second has public notoriety for it's voucher. The saint, in a letter to MACEDONIUS *, takes notice of a passage in the Proverbs of SOLOMON †, which runs to this effect in the septuagint version. “To the faithful man belongs a whole world of riches; to the infidel or unfaithful, not even a farthing ‖.” What sense the passage may receive, I enquire not: but this is the comment of St. AUSTIN upon it. “We have a property in that which we possess of right; we possess of right what we possess justly; we possess justly what we possess well; whatever is ill possessed therefore belongs to another; but he possesses a thing ill, who makes an ill use of it.” On this admirable foundation the good bishop establishes the right of such saints

* Ep. LIV. ed. Basil. † Prov. xvii. 6.

‖ Fidelis hominis totus mundus divitiarum est; infidelis autem nec obolus.

as himself, “ fideles et pii quorum jure sunt omnia,” to the property of the whole world. The right is in them, tho the iniquity of the unrighteous possessors be tolerated. “ Toleratur iniquitas male habentium, et quaedam inter eos jura constituuntur, quae appellantur civilia.” This however he is willing to connive at for the sake of present expediency, instead of insisting on an immediate cession of all this wealth, or on an actual repeal of all the laws of civil government. His words are so gracious that they deserve to be quoted. “ Sed tamen etiam hic non intercedimus, ut secundum mores legesque terrenas non restituantur aliena” etc. I believe this great doctor of the church appears to you, as he does to me, a casuist fit for VENNERS and the tribe of the fifth monarchy : and I cannot persuade myself that he was so inconsistent, as to refuse any estates, or other donations, that were offered to the church, or to restore any that had been given, tho it has been asserted, I remember not on what authority, that he did so.

THUS early, and thus violently, did a spirit of avarice possess the religious society : and we may easily conceive what a spirit of stupid bigotry and implicit resignation possessed the laity at the same time, when a little bishop of Hippo durst advance such doctrines, as I have quoted, to such a man as MACEDONIUS. He might be encouraged to make the claim by the practice of the first Christians ; for among them all things were in common :
the

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the rich sold their possessions, and laid the whole price at the feet of the apostles. I say the whole price ; and I add that it was strictly exacted, as we may assure ourselves from the example of ANANIAS and his wife SAPPHIRA *. They might have kept their estate, or the whole price they had sold it for. But when they brought it, in imitation of the zeal of other Christians, to the apostolical chamber or treasury, it became a fraud to keep back any part of it. Less than the whole would not satisfy the church : and St. PETER accuses them accordingly of fraud, and of lying to the Holy Ghost ; because they had given no more than they could spare, and had owned no more than they had given. The punishment followed instantly : they were both struck dead. It appears that great collections were made, and every church had a common purse. By these means they supported their poor : and every man, who embraced christianity, being sure not to want bread, the gospel was more effectually propagated, and great numbers of the lowest rank of people were brought into the pale. Another pious use of ecclesiastical wealth was to maintain the teachers and ministers of the word. We see, by St. PAUL's epistles, that they were so maintained in their several missions : and this apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, when he distinguishes himself from others, and values himself above them on many accounts, insists particularly on this, that he had preached gratis, and taken nothing from them. He had a trade, and he

* Acts c. v.

maintained himself by it; for which reason ERASMUS calls him, as I remember, “coriarius pontifex,” the leather-dressing pontiff.

It was not zeal alone, that brought an immense wealth to the church, even in the first centuries. An opinion that the end of the world was near, made the rich more indifferent to riches, that they were not to enjoy long, or that were not to remain long in their families. This opinion the clergy promoted: and the laity was so silly, as not to see that, if it was not worth their while to keep their estates, it was not worth the while of churchmen to be so solicitous to acquire them. The end of the world seemed to be fixed at the distance of about two hundred years, in the beginning of the fourth century, according to LACTANTIUS*, who wrote at that time: and yet this motive had such effect, in conjunction with a multitude of other artifices employed by the religious society to the same purpose, that in this very century a law to restrain ecclesiastics from obtaining donations and wills in their favor was become necessary. Not only VALENTINIAN and GRATIAN, but even THEODOSIUS, made edicts for this purpose: and the practice of inveigling weak people, devout women particularly, to defraud their right heirs, and to give their estates to the church, was so public, so frequent, and so infamous, that the church, who had permission to hold these estates, thought it prudent to

* Omnis expectatio non amplius quam ducentorum videtur annorum. Instit. l. vii. c. 25.

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submit to some appearance of restraint in acquiring them. I say appearance of restraint, because we may conclude that means were found of evading this very restraint, from the experience of our own age; and because it is fair to conclude that none were neglected of heaping up wealth in those ages, when bishops themselves were the greatest usurers. This wealth was such that it proved a principal cause of the persecutions of the church, as father PAUL observes*, from the reign of COMMODUS: and we know that DECIUS, who was a great and a good prince, as princes went in those days, and as they go in ours, attempted nothing more at first, than many christian princes have executed. He attempted to seize the treasure of the church at Rome. LAWRENCE, a deacon of that church, broke his measures. He put LAWRENCE to death, and the seventh persecution began on that occasion; for which his memory has been persecuted by christian writers; as that of CHARLES MARTEL has been by the monks, who sent him to hell for taking some of the wealth of the church to defend both the church and the state against the Saracens.

ABUNDANCE of matter offers itself to us on this head. But the immense wealth of the clergy, their insatiable thirst after it, the usurpations and other scandalous methods by which they acquired it, and the no less scandalous use they made of it, are now so well known, that it would be loss of time to enter into any great detail on the subject.

* Hist. of benefices.

A general observation or two will be sufficient for our purpose. Bishops found pretences and means of taking to their own use the revenues that had been appropriated to the poor, the churches, and the inferior clergy, as well as to them; and left the charge of maintaining all these on the laity, who had provided for them once already. The laity were so simple as to take the charge upon them, instead of obliging these lords of the religious society to keep to the original appropriation. Hence arose the divine right of tithes, and a multitude of other exactions. But if the laity thought that their pockets were to be picked no more, they were soon undeceived. The secular clergy, living no longer in communities, gave more public scandal, and became less fit to excite the charity of the faithful. A new clergy, therefore, arose: and monks and monasteries began about the year five hundred. The former were not all priests, indeed, at first. But the latter were retreats of men who obliged themselves to live in these convents, that I may speak with exact propriety, a cenobitic life, under the conduct of the priests, and in all the supposed regularity and austerity of the first Christians. These professions and engagements struck the imaginations, and roused the zeal of the faithful; and convents were endowed with as much profusion as if nothing had been yet done for the church. These orders degenerated apace; and as fast as they did so new orders were founded, and endowed, under the same pretence. Nothing was taken from those who had forfeited the con-
ditions

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ditions of the grants made to them, and much was given to those who took new engagements, and kept them as ill. Thus ecclesiastical policy contrived to enrich the church even by the corruption of the clergy, and to carry these abuses forward in an uniform gradation, and with an equal pace.

THE claim St. AUSTIN made to the riches of the whole world, as belonging of right to the elect, had not been made, I suppose, before his time; tho IRENAEUS had justified the robbery of the Egyptians by the Israelites, on principles much the same. This claim too was neither publicly asserted by himself, nor by his cotemporaries, nor by his successors, nor at any time by the church in form: the reason of which was, no doubt, that they saw how needless and imprudent it would be to give such an alarm to all mankind, when they might go on to plunder particular countries and families without resistance, tho sometimes against law; and always with very great effect. This the religious society did, before it had any pretence of alliance with the civil, or any establishment in the roman empire: and it is astonishing to consider, tho we meet with the examples and proofs almost in every page of history ecclesiastical and civil, how an order of men, instituted to teach a religion of so much purity, sanctity, and detachment from all worldly interests, could convert this very institution into a fordid trade, and make other men believe that the best of good works was to enrich this order, and the greatest of sins to take any thing

thing from it. This continued to be the case, however, near fifteen centuries, without any considerable interruption. During so long a course of time, the principles of the gospel were so forgotten, and so perverted, that salvation was a merchandise bought and sold in every ecclesiastical shop, in that of Rome above all. This shop had so much custom, that a pope of the fourteenth century, JOHN the twenty second, the inventor of annates and many other exactions, left behind him, by VILLANI's account, which father PAUL quotes in his History of benefices, eighteen millions in specie, and seven millions in plate and ingots. An immense sum in any age, especially in that when the West Indies had not been yet discovered.

THE abuse grew to be most exorbitant in the most devout ages of the church, that is, in the ages of greatest ignorance and superstition; for then the clergy had persuaded men, and the more corrupt they were, the more easily they were persuaded, that all sorts of crimes might be committed safely by those who submitted to the slight penances and pecuniary mulcts, which the church imposed, either arbitrarily, or according to a book of rates. When, I say, that crimes might be committed safely on these terms, I mean safely from divine vengeance; for the man whom the church pretended to screen from this would have been condemned at any human tribunal, and was so, I doubt not, often to the gallows or the rack. Thus

the great sanction of revealed religion was taken away by artificial theology and ecclesiastical fraud : and a great part of the objections that infidels urge against it receive a color from the doctrine and practice of that religious society, whose independency and divine institution are pleaded for so strenuously.

THE religious society was so far from being by any right independent on the civil, or from treating with it in form, and being incorporated with it on specific terms of alliance, when christianity became in a fortunate conjuncture the established religion of the empire, that this society grew into power, and into riches, as it has been said already, by degrees ; by indulgence and concessions on one hand, by art and management on the other. Claims precede acquisitions in the natural and ordinary course of things. But in this case acquisitions preceded claims. The church, indeed, made a claim to power, when she was first established ; but it was to spiritual power. Nothing else was avowed ; nothing else was suspected. The civil society did not see that spiritual power was power over opinion, and that this was power over conscience ; or, seeing it, did not enough consider how this power might extend and increase, how it might rival and subdue their own. But as soon as the church had drawn a great part of the affairs of civil government into her own tribunal, under the notion of spirituals, or of things appertaining to spirituals ; as soon as she had acquired a pre-
scriptive

scriptive right of employing the civil power in spiritual quarrels, and the spiritual power in civil, she claimed a sovereign and universal authority, seized the two swords into her hands, and sharpened the edge of both.

SECTION XXIII.

THE good effects of maintaining, and the bad effects of neglecting, religion, had been extremely visible in the whole course of the roman government. NUMA, the second founder of Rome, contributed more to the prosperity and grandeur of that empire, than the first founder of it, ROMULUS, and all the warrior kings who succeeded him; for NUMA established a religion, directed it, as others, both kings and consuls, did after his example, to the support of civil government, and made it the principle of all the glorious expectations that were raised in the minds of that people. This religion was very absurd; and yet by keeping up an awe of superior powers, and the belief of a providence that ordered the course of events, it produced all the marvellous effects, which MACHIAVEL, and writers more able to judge of them and of their causes than he was, POLYBIUS, CICERO, PLUTARCH, and others ascribe to it. The inward peace of that government was often broke by seditions: Rome was in distress at home whilst she triumphed abroad, and at last the dissolution of the commonwealth followed a long and bloody series of civil war. But the neglect of religion,

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ligion, not religion, was a principal cause of these evils. Religion decayed: and the state decayed with her. She might have preserved it; but even in her decay she gave it no wounds, nor festered like a poison in any.

THIS example, many others, and the reason of things were sufficient to make such a man as CONSTANTINE see the necessity of reviving and reforming the antient religion of Rome, or of establishing a new one; in short, of taking in the assistance of some religion or other to pursue more effectually the great designs of his ambition. His rivals in the empire were Pagans: and paganism did more than begin to be no longer a proper band of society. The superstitious opinions and practices of it were as much in vogue in his time, as they had been in the best ages of Rome; but they were not directed, as they had been in those ages, to the support of civil government. The virtue of old Rome, and the spirit of her religion, fainted when her liberty expired: and they were wholly extinguished in the time of CONSTANTINE, by a long course of tyrannical dominion seldom interrupted, by the venality of the senate now and long before inured to slavery, by the ferocity of the armies, by the licentiousness of the provinces, and by that independency on the authority, as well as disregard to the majesty, of the empire, which prevailed in both.

ON the other hand, christianity, born, if I may
say

say so, in a desert, and educated in a little province of the empire, had spread through the whole in the course of three centuries. The progress of it was not so immense, perhaps, as TERTULLIAN represents it in his hyperbolical style. But it was great, and Christians under one denomination or another were numerous in every part of the east and west. Paganism was worn out in one sense, in theory, if not in practice; the impostures of it were detected; the absurd doctrines and rites were exposed to ridicule. The priests could not defend it, and the philosophers explained it away. It lay exposed like an unfortified country, and, as the empire did soon afterwards, to every incursion. Christianity was fresh and vigorous. The apparent sanctity of those who professed this religion, the courage of those who died for it, and the zeal of those philosophers and rhetors who were converted to it and writ for it, were more than sufficient to defeat the calumny raised against it. They were more than sufficient, I mean, to defeat it among all such, as, finding it to be calumny in some instances, looked no farther, but deemed it to be the same in all. Among others, and in general, the very name of Christian continued to be odious long. A spirit of enthusiasm prompted many on one side to revile and disturb the rites of an established religion, to provoke the heathen, to rejoice in sufferings, and to court martyrdom. A spirit of party, inflamed by resentment, transported the other side to exercise the greatest cruelties, by sudden popular emotions, as well as by regular au-

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thorised persecutions. But as soon as the christian
faith and worship, by being tolerated first, and le-
gally established soon afterwards, became better
known, the grossest calumnies that had been pro-
pagated against them began to die away even
among the vulgar. These calumnies had been
such as could not bear examination; more gross,
if that be possible, than any of those which Christi-
ans have propagated against the heathens, the
Jews, the Mahometans, or even against one an-
other in their several sects. One may easily con-
ceive that the detection of these turned to the ad-
vantage of christianity, and that patience under
this kind of persecution, as well as fortitude and
perseverance under another, did honor to the pro-
fessors of this religion, and prepared the way to
the establishment of it.

THERE is another circumstance of the same ten-
dency, which deserves to be mentioned. Whilst
the Christians were confounded with the Jews, or
passed for a sect of that religion, they shared the
hatred and contempt which that nation had con-
tracted. But they distinguished themselves soon
in a manner, that took off all prejudice of this kind
from them, and shewed the wisdom and policy of
St. PAUL's conduct in declaring himself the apo-
stle of the Gentiles, to whom the kingdom of
CHRIST was opened, and who were heirs of the pro-
mises, as well as the Jews. On this popular prin-
ciple christianity was propagated: and one of the
first edicts, that CONSTANTINE published, in favor
of

of christianity, was a very severe one against Jews who should insult Christians, and Christians who should turn to judaism. The Jews were no longer a chosen people : their nation was rejected ; and all the nations of the earth were invited to partake of the same privileges, the same graces, and the same salvation. Thus the christian religion was made the religion of mankind, by the first principles of it, even whilst it was a sect : and therefore CONSTANTINE might think very reasonably, that to embrace and establish it would be an effectual mean of uniting mankind under his government. He might think this establishment the more easy to be made by his authority, because the mysteries of christianity were more sublime and more refined, and therefore more proper objects of veneration, than those of paganism, tho many of them had been borrowed from it ; and because the external worship of the new religion might be rendered, if that should be thought necessary, as pompous, and as fit to draw the attention of the people, as that of the old, by adopting some of the ceremonies and usages of the old : which adoption the christian church had already begun to put in practice.

ALL this was done : and no man, who considers what influence not princes only, but private men raised to the head of parties, have had in the change of religions, will think it was hard for CONSTANTINE to do it when he had persuaded his troops that they beat MAXENTIUS under the ensign of the cross, and when he disputed the empire

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with LICINIUS, the declared enemy of the cross afterwards. Christianity became the established religion of the empire, and heathenism, in its turn, a persecuted sect, banished from the cities by CONSTANTINE and his successors, and forced to hide its head in villages and hamlets. Whilst gentilism, or the religion of nations, was the established religion, christianity maintained itself in most of the cities of the empire. But as soon as this religion had taken possession of the court and the cities, the other became so generally that of peasants only, that the appellation of paganism did, probably enough, take its rise from thence.

THIS great revolution was effected in part by the circumstances I have mentioned, and by others that favored the growth of christianity. The imperial authority did the rest, but did it ill, so ill, that the chief of those political views, which CONSTANTINE had in making this establishment, were defeated by it; and the admission of a religious society into the state, in the manner in which he admitted it, was the cause of all the ecclesiastical and theological evils that have followed from his time to ours, and that are so falsely imputed to religion itself. We may be assured that the society co-operated with the court to bring about a revolution so much to their advantage, and thought themselves happy enough to be dependent, not independent, on the emperor; his instruments, not his allies; whatever appearances he might give or suffer them to assume in those

those solemn ecclesiastical farces, wherein he con-
 descended to act, in some respects, a second part.
 This supposition is easily reconciled to history:
 and if it was less so, history would be only the
 more inconsistent. We should never persuade
 ourselves that such a man, as it represents CON-
 STANTINE to have been, was a bigot as much as
 HELENA, or revered priests as much as she
 did relics. He was not a bigot, tho the church
 has made him a saint; nor a bubble of ecclesiasti-
 cal policy, tho it seems to me that he was so of
 his own. But whilst he recalled to his mind, as
 he did most probably, the great service religion
 was of to antient Rome, he seemed to forget that,
 when that religion flourished, and was of so much
 service to the state, it was under the immedi-
 ate inspection of the state. There was no council,
 but the senate, to define doctrines, nor to regu-
 late discipline: and men were at the head of reli-
 gious, because they were at the head of civil
 administration; instead of being at the head of
 the latter, because they were at the head of the
 former.

WE cannot doubt that the political views of CON-
 STANTINE, in the establishment of christianity, were
 to attach the subjects of the empire more firmly to
 himself and his successors, and the several provinces
 and the several nations, that composed it, to one
 another, by the bonds of a religion common to all
 of them; to soften the ferocity of the armies;
 to reform the licentiousness of the provinces, and,
 by

by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire was so often and so fatally broken. Now no religion was ever so well proportioned, nor so well directed, as that of christianity seemed to be, to all these purposes. It had, indeed, no tendency to inspire that love of the country, nor that zeal for the glory and grandeur of it, which glowed in the breast of every roman citizen almost, whilst the commonwealth was in splendor. But it recommended, what CONSTANTINE liked better, benevolence, patience, humility, and all the softer virtues, subjection to the civil powers as to the ordinances of God, and passive obedience and non-resistance. These it recommended: and these, it is said, the Christians had practised, not only whilst they lay under the ordinary hardships imposed upon them, but under the extraordinary severity of ten persecutions, wherein ecclesiastical writers boast, how truly may be doubted, that thirty bishops of the church of Rome alone were martyred*.

SUCH

* ECCLESIASTICAL, like all other party writers, deserve little credit when they relate facts, or draw characters, which may seem to reflect honor on those of their own side, and to render their adversaries odious. That Christians were sometimes persecuted, is a point out of dispute. But whether these persecutions were so frequent, so severe, and so unprovoked, as they stand represented, is a point very disputable. If some of the emperors, and those not of the worst, used the Christians

ill;

SUCH doctrines and such examples might well encourage CONSTANTINE to think that nothing could

ill; others, and those not of the best, shewed them favor. ORIGEN, who was the son of a martyr, and who aspired to be such himself, asserts^a, I think, that they, who suffered for their religion, were few. The authority is good, and the matter of fact probable. Whoever considers the temper and character of sects, of religious sects especially, and of the primitive Christians among others, will think it probable that, whenever they were punished by the heathen magistrates, they were ready to impute their punishment to their christianity, and to complain of persecution. Their clergy were, under pretence of religion, a very lawless tribe, and paid little regard, on many occasions, to the government whose subjects they were. They usurped the part of civil judges, they assumed the power of making wills, they took possession by fraud, or violence, of the estates of others; and not content to break the laws in such instances as these, which may be called private, they broke them in the most public manner, and instigated others to break them by popular insurrections against the legal authority of magistrates, and by tumults, and riots, in which they insulted not only the established religion of the empire, but even their own religion, as it was practised by those who differed from them in any points of doctrine or discipline. Zeal, worked up to enthusiasm, pushed them to these excesses: and we may well believe that they who were punished for them were decorated with the title of martyrs, and made the heroes of pious romances by the zeal of others. The list of martyrs consisted, I believe, of those who suffered for breaking the peace, and for insulting one religion, as much as of those who suffered for professing quietly another, nay more: and thus it might be immeasurably lengthened. Thus too the assertion of ORIGEN may be reconciled easily to the opinion that there was an innumerable army of martyrs in the primitive church. We find passages in the letters of JULIAN, which confirm very much what is here supposed. In that which he writes to the Alexandrians it appears that he did not banish ATHANASIUS because he was a bishop, but on account of his intriguing spirit, and the

^a Lib. iii. contra Cels.

could contribute more, than the establishment of christianity in the empire, to the establishment of hereditary imperial dignity in his family, and to universal peace and tranquillity. He was confirmed in this expectation, no doubt, by the professions and adulations of SYLVESTER, and of the whole tribe of ecclesiastics; whether the tale of his conversion by this pope has any more truth in it, than that of his famous grant to the church of Rome, or not. But in order to discern the better how these professions were kept, and what the effects have been of this ecclesiastical establishment, we must descend into some few particulars, at least, concerning it, from CONSTANTINE to CHARLES the great, and from CHARLES the great down to our own age. The usurpations of the religious on the civil society, the abuse of theology, and the abominable consequences of

disturbances he raised. JULIAN gives the Christians leave to chuse any other bishop, who might instruct them as well as ATHANASIUS; and adds, that if they desired to have him at Alexandria for any other reason, that was the reason for which he was banished. This emperor, on whose testimony, tho he was an apostate, a reasonable man, who considered the characters of both, would rely much sooner, than he would rely on that of such a turbulent, intriguing, foul-mouthed priest as CYRIL: this emperor, I say, complains loudly of the christian flocks for persecuting one another, and for insulting the established church, at the instigation of their pastors. When he promises, therefore, to force none to worship at his altars, and commands the heathens not to injure nor affront any of them, he commands them likewise to live in peace with the heathens and with one another, and threatens to punish them, not for their religion, but for sedition, and the violation of the civil laws.

this abuse, were in part alike, and in part different, and differently carried on with regard to power especially, in these two periods, which for that reason it is good to distinguish.

SECTION XXIV.

THESSE usurpations might have been wholly prevented: and altho the abuse of theology, which was grown up to a great height, could not be so, yet might the growth of it have been checked, and the tragical effects of it have been prevented, if CONSTANTINE had reduced, and his successors had kept the clergy within proper bounds, instead of giving such a loose to avarice and ambition, to enthusiasm and contentious subtilty, as made them the plagues and scourges of the world. The emperors were sovereign pontiffs. As such, either with this title, or without it, they should have kept the whole power over ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs in their own hands, and have applied the former to preserve order and discipline, to prevent abuse and corruption in the christian, as it had been their prerogative and their duty to apply it in the heathen church. This was natural; this was reasonable. But nothing could be more unnatural, nor more unreasonable, than to divest themselves of any part of the imperial power in favor of this order.

It seems too that there could be no need of doing so. That the bishops gave the emperors
leave

leave to retain the title of sovereign pontiffs, is one of those idle tales which BARONIUS invented. But that no objection appears to have been made to it by the Christians, is true; and if there was no objection made for holding a pagan pontificate, there would have been certainly none for assuming that office in the christian church. I will not say that the emperors might have performed pontifical functions; tho I see no absurdity in the proposition, nor am able to conceive why they should not have exacted to be ordained priests and primates of the whole christian church from the first, if that form had been thought necessary, as they have submitted to be crowned emperors, since that time, by the bishops. But this I will say, and no divine of our church will dare to contradict me, that they might have made themselves heads of the church, defenders of the faith, and, next under God and his son CHRIST JESUS, supreme moderators and governors in all matters ecclesiastical and civil, without being priests. From whence should any opposition to CONSTANTINE or his successors have arisen, if he or they had thought fit to execute the functions of christian pontiffs, when the state of religion in the empire permitted them to do so; since they kept the title, wore the robe, and executed some of the powers, at least, of supreme pontiffs in the pagan church? Should it have come from the bishops? But the bishops were mean and generally ignorant men, exercised in the lowest and least honorable professions, elected by party
and

and faction, by intrigue and violence, and ready to comply with any mode that was prevalent, according to the character given of them nearly about this time by St. GREGORY of Nazianzum. We may assure ourselves the good men would have founded high the honor which CONSTANTINE did the church, and his zeal for our holy religion, before they had got the strength they got afterwards, for want of this very precaution. Then, indeed, such an inequality of privileges and advantages was established between the clergy and the laity in many respects, and in this particularly, that the former were deemed capable of exercising all the powers, and of enjoying all the dignities and profits of civil magistracies, whilst the latter were excluded from all ecclesiastical power, dignity, and profit. In a word, we may believe that this step would have been popular among the whole body of Christians when their religion was first established. Nothing would have appeared more just, than that an emperor, by whose favor alone they became members of an established church, from being members of a sect, seldom tolerated, often persecuted, and always afflicted, should suffer no diminution of his imperial prerogative in this great change.

CONSTANTINE neglected to take this advantage in the extent in which he might have asserted his right to it. He took, indeed, some airs of supremacy on certain occasions; and so did his successors. They presided in the synods they convened,

vened, they controlled the proceedings of these assemblies, and they confirmed their decrees in matters of doctrine as well as discipline; for without this confirmation these decrees would have had little effect. By these means the emperors secured their prerogative, on which ecclesiastical synods would not have failed to encroach more than they did, or at least faster, in cases of appeals, of exemptions from secular jurisdiction, or from the common burden of taxes, and in many other cases. But the successors of CONSTANTINE, laying aside even the title of sovereign pontiffs in little more than half a century, if GRATIAN did lay it aside; and neither CONSTANTINE nor they having preserved a steady exercise of the pontifical power over ecclesiastical affairs and ecclesiastical persons in the christian church, the exercise of it devolved of course on the bishops. A constant exercise gave the pretence, and settled the opinion of a sole right in them, who could have none independently on the emperors, even in ordinary cases, to many extraordinary powers, whilst an occasional exercise of powers, that belonged of right to these princes, came to be looked upon in them as usurpation and sacrilege. Their chaplains became their masters: and one of these pretends to be so even at this time. How CONSTANTINE was the bubble of his own policy, as I have presumed to say that he was, as many great men have been, and as CHARLEMAGNE was in much the same respect four hundred years after him, may be shewn, I think, on good grounds of probability,

bability, without supposing him to have been misled by a bigot respect for the church, which many of those who succeeded him were. It may be shewn, I think, even by ecclesiastical history, for this, like other histories, shews very often more than it owns, even what it denies; and the sagacity of the reader gives him often a right of saying to the historian, “Ex ore tuo condemna-
beris.”

Thus it seems to me that the great and fundamental error, from whence so many others proceeded, and which CONSTANTINE committed in the establishment of christianity, was this, which has been touched already: He admitted a clergy into the establishment on the same foot, on which this order had stood whilst christianity was the religion, and these men were the heads, the directors, the governors, and magistrates of a sect by no authority, but that of the sect itself, and therefore illegally such. He admitted them vested with this authority, which might be necessary as long as Christians made a sect apart, distinct from the other subjects of the empire, and not only out of the protection of the laws, but obnoxious to them; and which became unnecessary and dangerous when christianity had a legal establishment, and when the professors of it were entirely incorporated into the empire, enjoyed the protection of the laws in common with other subjects, and more of the smiles and favors of the court. The conduct of CONSTANTINE, on this

great occasion, must needs appear extremely absurd to every one who considers the consequences it had. But we may easily conceive that the state of christianity, of paganism, and of the empire in general, as well as a multitude of particular circumstances to us unknown, might determine him on apparent reasons of good policy to hold it. If we seek for these reasons in the historians of that age, or in more modern ecclesiastical writers, we shall be misled or disappointed. EUSEBIUS wrote a panegyric, ZOZIMUS a satire: and no relations can be more confused, no authority more precarious than those of all the authors who have treated these subjects, and indeed every other ecclesiastical subject, from that age to this. They have been all intent to serve some particular turn: and tho all men are regardless of truth in such a disposition of mind, yet are there none so regardless of it as these writers, who have rendered church history more inconsistent, and more grossly fabulous, than any other history, perhaps than some romances. But still, notwithstanding the little reliance that any of them deserve, some general truths result from the concurrent tenor of their writings; two of which I shall mention, in order to account for the conduct of CONSTANTINE.

SECTION XXV.

THE first of these truths is, that this emperor neither designed to establish christianity, nor did in fact establish it with any other view, than that

that of making it subservient to his ambition and policy. He worked up this establishment of religion, which he preferred to paganism for reasons already given, by slow degrees, as he found it answer his purposes ; and he trimmed long between the two. The second of these truths is, that in the design of attaching the whole body of Christians to himself, he chose to do it by the medium of the clergy. The Christians were dispersed over the empire, and even beyond the bounds of it. They were of all nations and all languages. But among them all this order of men, which we call the religious society, was established. This order was often divided ; and their divisions formed different sects. But however divided they were, nay the more they were divided, the more need they had of imperial favor. The pastors were brought by one common interest under the influence of the court ; and the flocks were every where under the influence of their pastors. These two principles run through the whole conduct of CONSTANTINE, in every relation of it that is come down to us.

THERE is little room to doubt that he had taken the resolution of establishing christianity when he marched, in the seventh year of his reign, from Gaul into Italy against MAXENTIUS. It is much more probable too that this resolution produced the miracle of an illuminated cross in the air, with an inscription promising him victory, and which he affirmed upon oath that he

had seen, as EUSEBIUS relates; than that any such miracle produced his conversion. A story like this was sufficient to make the impression he designed. Nay that which ZOZIMUS relates of a monstrous flight of owls, that settled on the walls of Rome when MAXENTIUS marched out of the city to give CONSTANTINE battle, and which this emperor seeing, drew out his troops, might have it's effect likewise. His army did not consist of Romans, attached to their antient religion, tho even by such the omen would have been well received, but of Britons, whom we believe to have been already Christians, and of the celtic nations, to whom we may believe that all religions were indifferent enough.

BUT however this might be, whether CONSTANTINE came into Italy with a resolution of establishing christianity, and of leaning on that party in the empire, or whether he took the resolution when he had beat MAXENTIUS, it is evident that this resolution was no other than I have represented it. LICINIUS was not certainly a convert to christianity, and yet the first edict in favor of this religion was published in his name and by his authority, as well as in the name and by the authority of CONSTANTINE. This edict gave an entire liberty of conscience. No person was to be any longer restrained from embracing christianity, but every one was set at liberty to profess the religion he liked best. This was the purport of the edict. EUSEBIUS himself carries it no farther,
and

and there was nothing in it which LICINIUS, or any other pagan prince, who thought it his interest to relax the severity of former edicts, and to keep measures of moderation with the Christians, might not grant without becoming a Christian. Many other favors, more considerable and particular to christianity, were granted afterwards. EUSEBIUS founds them high*: and they were great, no doubt, tho they did little more than re-establish Christians in their former rights and possessions, remit unjust and cruel sentences, restore confiscations, and recal from banishment and the mines such as had been condemned to them. In all these instances, the authority of LICINIUS concurred with that of CONSTANTINE: and if paganism was not extirpated, christianity was in a good degree established, whilst they governed the empire jointly. When they quarrelled, the same political motive, that made LICINIUS change his conduct and persecute the Christians, made CONSTANTINE persist in shewing favor to them. He raised them to the highest dignities, entrusted them with the most important commands, and increased the strength of a party in the empire which was zealously attached to him.

NOTWITHSTANDING this he trimmed with the other, and it is evident that his zeal for christianity was at least as much political as religious. EUSEBIUS makes him very devout and pious, and compares, in one place, his palace to a church

* EUSEB. passim in Hist. et in Vita CONSTANT.

in which assemblies of the faithful were held. But as the flagrant crimes he committed are inconsistent with the devotion and piety ascribed to him by ecclesiastical adulation, so the whole tenor of his public acts demonstrates that ZOZIMUS had some reason to say, he favored the pagan rites in order to please the senate, tho he meant to establish christianity. Thus he permitted, even about the time that he held the nicean council, and by a solemn rescript, that the aruspices should be publicly consulted ; nay he commanded it on the occasion of some reputed prodigies that had happened. Thus, again, he gave countenance, at least, to several superstitious sports that were celebrated in acknowledgment of victories obtained, and to several sorts of enchantments that were deemed effectual to procure health and other divine favors. Many instances of the same kind may be produced, to shew what measures CONSTANTINE thought himself obliged in good policy to keep with paganism, even after he had vanquished LICINIUS, and put him to death. But it will be sufficient that I mention one more, which was the strongest of all, and which leads to the second of those general truths, that have been observed to result from all the histories of this great revolution.

THAT several offices, which were not only pagan in name, but in their functions too, were possessed and executed by those who professed christianity, seems to me much more clear, than the
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disting-

distinctions and excuses that are brought in favor of the practice. The practice was authorised by the example of CONSTANTINE, who held to the last the supreme pontificate of the pagan church. I know that some writers have ventured to deny the fact, against the evidence of history and ancient inscriptions. I know too that much casuistry has been employed by BARONIUS and others, to shew that christian emperors might assume the title, and wear the robe, without superstition or idolatry; for these authors are pleased to suppose that they did no more. But they contradict themselves when they excuse even this by urging that the authority of supreme pontiff was necessary to keep the senate and the bulk of the people, who were strongly addicted to the old religion, in subjection to the imperial authority; for how could the authority of supreme pontiff have this or any other effect, unless it was exercised? And how could it be exercised without taking some share in the superstitious discipline signified by that mystic robe, which GRATIAN is said * to have refused to wear for that very reason? But if GRATIAN was thus scrupulous, and his successors after him, of which we may have leave to doubt, CONSTANTINE was not so; or he might wear the mystic robe of pontiff with as little regard to the significations of it, as one of the OTTHOS had, very probably, to those of the robe he wore, and whereon the revelations of the apocalypse were expressed in embroidery. The power

* ZOZIMUS.

and influence of this office had been great at all times, and therefore the emperors had kept it, like that of the tribunes, in their own hands. But this power and this influence were never greater than now, and the office of pontiff was grown more considerable than that of consul. It is very probable that CONSTANTINE dared not divest himself of it: and I believe the best reason that can be given why he did not make himself sovereign pontiff of the Christians is this, that he found it necessary, or at least expedient, to continue high priest of the Pagans. The absurdity, however, was equally great, whether it was owing to his misfortune or his fault: the absurdity, I mean, of presiding over a church he intended to subvert, and not presiding over that which he intended to erect.

THE consequences began to appear very soon, and have continued ever since producing, under various forms, in various ways, and with little or no interruption, an uniformity of mischief. The pre-eminence and dominion over conscience, which a religious society had acquired among the Christians whilst they were a sect in the empire, did not only continue, but were vastly extended and increased when this religion became the established religion of the empire. They were extended and increased in the exercise, and therefore in the effect of them. No powers were taken from this order of men, not even those to which they had the least pretence after this great change. On the contrary,
many

many were added to them, and the weight of that civil authority, on which they usurped, served to inforce their usurpations. Their pre-eminence and their dominion over conscience had been so far from promoting charity, and maintaining unity, that they had promoted and maintained a perpetual strife and contention among Christians. If Christians suffered much by heathen persecutions, they suffered much by their own intestine divisions. They could not, indeed, make war, and massacre one another, nor disturb, in that manner, the peace of the empire. The authority of the emperors, and the strength of the roman legions kept them in awe, and made such excesses impracticable. But their divisions were such, that the sect might have been dissolved, perhaps, whilst it was a sect, and the very name of christianity have been lost, if the salutary remedy of a persecution, common to them all, had not sometimes intervened to make them remember that they were all of the same religion. These disorders, however, being confined to a sect, affected the roman state no more, than ours would be affected if any disputes should arise about inward light and spiritual gifts among the Quakers, and if those peaceable persons should fall out, call names, and excommunicate one another. But when the empire became christian, these divisions became fatal to the public tranquillity and welfare.

CONSTANTINE had some experience of this in his own reign, towards the end of it especially. But he might still hope, and the submissive behaviour

of

of the clergy towards him might encourage him to hope that, however divided they were concerning speculative points of religion, he should hold them fast to his interest by their own ; and being master of the shepherds, should be master of the flocks, as it has been hinted already. He pursued this principle therefore. He added to the dignity of ecclesiastical persons by the regard he shewed them, and by the honors he affected to do them. He added to their power and authority by the wealth, the privileges, and immunities he bestowed upon them, and by the laws he made in their favor. All this tended, in appearance and in pretence, to the support and improvement of a spiritual power alone. He meant that this should be distinct from the civil ; that they should be independent of one another, and both dependent on him : and he did not see that this was a distinction without any real difference. He does not seem to have enough considered two things, which long experience has made manifest since, and which one would imagine he should have foreseen. He should have foreseen that ecclesiastical magistrates would be always less dependent on the emperors, than the civil, and were for that reason less fit to be trusted with power. It was obvious that civil magistrates were the creatures of his will, whom he could make and unmake at pleasure, and not only deprive of the offices they held, but of all right to any magistracy whatever ; whereas these ecclesiastical magistrates, whom he admitted by a legal establishment into the empire, were elected independently

pendently on him into particular offices, and had a right to this sort of magistracy in general, which he could neither give nor take away. He should have foreseen that an absolute power over private consciences was in nature, and might prove in effect, a much greater power than his own; that the church might turn against the state; from the companion become the rival, and from the rival, the tyrant of it. This happened in four centuries after his time. The constitution of the christian church, before CONSTANTINE laid the foundations of that spiritual tyranny, which he and his successors raised; and this spiritual tyranny, established and grown into full strength before CHARLES the great, laid the foundations of that temporal tyranny, which he and his father established in the bishops of Rome, the remains of which are still existent.

SECTION XXVI.

DURING this period, that reaches from the beginning of the fourth to the end of the eighth century, the religious society pretended directly to spiritual power alone, as it has been observed. Indirectly, indeed, they assumed a share of the other, encroached on the civil magistrates, and opposed and insulted them, whereof there were several instances at Rome and Alexandria particularly *. But in the main, they expressed

* No instance of this kind can be given greater than the whole conduct of CYRIL, the alexandrian bishop. This saint
great

great respect and submission to the emperors. CONSTANTINE abetted them in the exercise of this

and father of the church was violent and cruel against all those who differed from him, even in expression; for NESTORIUS did little more: and yet, when he had prevailed on THEODOSIUS, by bribing most probably the eunuch SCHOLASTICUS, to turn at once from favoring NESTORIUS to declare against him, this wretch, in concert with pope CELESTINUS, persecuted the poor man to death with the most persevering and inveterate malice. He shewed the same violence of temper in usurping on the civil power, and in supporting these usurpations by riots, insurrections, and assassinations. He took upon him, without any authority from the civil magistrate, to punish not only Jews, but such Christians as he called heretics; to drive them out of the city, and to plunder their houses and churches, the spoils of which he abandoned to the mob, who were the instruments of his tyranny, for their greater encouragement. ORESTES, the governor of Alexandria, complained of these invasions and outrages, and attempted to restrain them, as it was his duty to do. But CYRIL, by exciting the common people, the most seditious that were to be found in any city of the empire, maintained, as it were, a civil war in that city, and called in another sort of mob to join with this in supporting it. He called in five hundred monks at once from their retreats in the mountains of Nitria. To one of these, named AMMONIUS, a fit instrument for his purpose, he gave the command of this secular and ecclesiastical mob, by whom ORESTES was attacked in the streets of Alexandria. He was rescued, indeed, and his life was saved, tho he had been wounded by AMMONIUS in the fray. The mob was dispersed, AMMONIUS seized and put to death, and CYRIL had the impudence to declare him a martyr, and to cause him to be honored as such.

It may not be amiss to mention another example of the revengeful and sanguinary character of this prelate. HYPATIA was a platonician lady, of so much wisdom, knowledge, and virtue, that she used to be consulted by the philosophers, and even the governors of Alexandria, and that ORESTES was
 particulaly

this power: and his successors, sometimes through bigotry, and sometimes through policy, as we may collect from the different characters of these princes, made themselves parties, on one side or the other, in every ecclesiastical dispute that arose. This gave them much to do, maintained a perpetual ferment in the empire, and was almost as great an evil from within, as the inundation of barbarous nations was from without.

LET us not presume, like many divines, to account, by the short and fallible rule of human reason, for what providence directs or suffers. But we may observe with astonishment, that a religion, revealed by God himself, taught by himself in one country, where he sealed it with his blood, as strangely as that may sound to a mere theist, and propagated through a great part of the world by persons commissioned by him, as well as assisted supernaturally by the Holy Ghost, should continue more than seventeen hundred years in a flux state.

particularly attached to her. To be revenged, therefore, of ORESTES, for HYPATIA does not appear to have given him any provocation, this woman was attacked by another ecclesiastical bravo, whose name was PETER, at the instigation of CYRIL, in the streets of Alexandria, where they stripped her naked, dragged her along, and made her suffer the most cruel outrages, till she expired.

It is not worth my while to quote any more instances of the usurpations and cruelty which the religious society exercised, whenever, and wherever, they durst. History is full of them. They were exercised at Rome sometimes, as well as at Alexandria, and wherever christianity prevailed.

I affirm

I affirm the more boldly that it has continued in this state so long, because, tho it will be said, and is said every day in the pulpit, that all the important points of christianity, and every thing made necessary to salvation, are fixed and clear, yet the assertion is evidently false when it is applied to theological, however true it would be, if it was applied to gospel christianity; and it may be proved to be so even out of the inconsistent mouths of those who make it. To whatever sect we addict ourselves, if we are saved, it must be on the faith of man, it cannot be on that of God; for the pure word of God neither is nor ever has been the sole criterion of orthodoxy. Theology has done by the word, as philosophy did by the works of God, and the same abuse has been made of both. Naturalists have built immense systems of imagination on a few sensible phaenomena, inaccurately observed very often, and not always very fairly recorded. Divines have done the same, on a few intelligible and unintelligible passages, picked up here and there in the scriptures, and connected and commented as their purposes required. The first have not stopped where the phaenomena have ceased; nor the other, where the scriptures have been silent, or have not spoken clearly; which ought to be reputed the same, and to check our presumption alike. On the contrary, where they have had no rule to go by, like men freed from restraint, they have gone the greatest and the boldest lengths. This has been the case from the apostolical days to these, and to this we owe all the disputes

disputes that have puzzled religion, and all the mischief which these disputes have brought on the world. This must be the case too, till divines return to the gospel, as philosophers have returned to nature, and presume to dogmatise no farther than the plain import of it will justify, contenting themselves to leave things dark and ambiguous, which revelation has left so. How soon this will happen, I know not. Such a method is now, as it was of old, too sober for enthusiasts, the subject too barren for rhetors, and the avowal of ignorance too humble for doctors, who pretend to teach supernatural, as well as natural theology, and to assume to themselves, that knowledge, which CHRIST intended should be common to all who are to be saved by it, as ERASMUS somewhere or other observes *. But we must go back again to the primitive ages, that we may see, in some few particular instances, the rise and growth of human authority in matters of religion.

It was foretold that false prophets would arise among Christians, and it was natural that they should in such an age, in countries where the minds of men had been long prepared for every thing that appeared supernatural or mystic, and on the publication of a religion new and marvellous. Converted Jews might think, and in fact did think, that they had a right to take their share in building up and adorning a religion, which

* — ad paucos homines contrahimus rem, qua CHRISTUS voluit nihil esse communius.

sprung out of theirs, and whose authority rested on that of their prophecies. Converted heathens might think, and in fact did think, that they had at least as good a right of the same kind, since some of the most sublime doctrines of christianity were such as PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had taught, and since the prophecies, urged from heathen records concerning CHRIST, were much more clear and express than any of those that were brought from the jewish scriptures. But there were other circumstances, which gave more immediate temptation and pretence to the false prophets that arose in the days of the apostles, and multiplied very fast afterwards, like swarms of insects from those dung-hills, the cabalistical schools of Jews, and the metaphysical schools of heathens.

THE christian system of faith and practice was taught by God himself; and to assert or to imply that the divine Logos, who was incarnated to instruct as well as to redeem mankind, revealed it incompletely or imperfectly, is not less absurd nor less impious, than to assert, or to imply, that he performed the work of our redemption incompletely or imperfectly. Christianity therefore, as the saviour published it, was full and sufficient to all the purposes of it. Simplicity and plainness shewed that it was designed to be the religion of mankind, and manifested likewise the divinity of it's original. But then, this very simplicity and plainness was a stumbling block to some, and a pretence to others. The theology of those ages
had

had accustomed men to think that nothing could be divine, which was not mysterious, and that incoherent, obscure rhapsodies, which are frequently the language of ignorance or fraud, were sure characteristics of superior knowledge in the first philosophy, or of inspiration from above. The prophets, among the Jews, had spoke in this style; the heathen oracles pronounced enigmas; the theology of Egypt and the east was unintelligible; and the metaphysical refinements of the greek philosophers were a mere jargon of words, supposed to signify most sublime truths, tho they had really no meaning at all. The Jews, therefore, who believed in the Messiah when he appeared, and the heathens, who heard that the divine Logos had appeared, could not fail to receive his doctrine agreeably to their prejudices and habitudes. A system of natural law, enforced by a divine mission and a divine sanction, had nothing in it which was new to either of them; and the heathens knew that the title of Son of God had been given to ZOROASTER and to others. But the simplicity and plainness of his doctrine might surprize them the more, for this very reason. They could scarce fail to persuade themselves that this simplicity and plainness must be the veil of something more marvellous and more worthy of a revelation. All was type and figure in the sacred writings of the Jews, and they were obliged to understand now of a spiritual, what they had till now understood of a temporal kingdom. All the gross conceptions of polytheism and idolatry were exploded. Heaven

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continued to be peopled as much as ever, but
with inhabitants of another kind. In short, all
the pompous rites and ceremonies of external wor-
ship were abolished at first among Christians, and
God was to be adored in spirit and in truth. Af-
ter such changes as these, it seems to me that the
converts to christianity could not, as they did not,
fail, agreeably to their prejudices and habitudes,
to embroider some of the tinsel of the religions
they left on the religion they embraced, nor to
make the spirituality of one as fit to create asto-
nishment, and to maintain an attachment in the
minds of men, as the carnality of the others.

THIS was done, and great means of doing it
offered themselves. Christianity was taught first,
and propagated afterwards, by word of mouth.
So the apostles and the disciples received it, and
so they instructed the converts they made in their
several dispersions. Nor were these the sole
preachers of divine revelation. Others arose who
had not been taught in the same school, nor been
commissioned to teach in the same manner. PAUL
himself was one of these. He entered a volunteer
into the apostleship. At least his extraordinary
vocation was known to none but himself. He
went about preaching his gospel, as he called it,
before he had any correspondence, or even ac-
quaintance, with those who composed the church
of CHRIST at that time; and when he came among
them he took the air of a master, submitted to
none, but controlled and reprimanded even the
prince

prince of the apostles, as you pretended catholics affect to call St. PETER. The apostles, the disciples, and the first converts in general, were ignorant, illiterate persons. Such men, therefore, as deemed themselves more skilful in cabalistical interpretations of the scriptures, and more knowing in jewish and heathen theology, might assume the same rights which the apostles and disciples exercised; teach, convert, and form different congregations: or they might add to, and alter the doctrines, which the apostles and disciples taught, and thus form different sects in the same churches, by assuming no other right than that which every member had, man and woman indiscriminately, the right of prophesying or preaching as often, as they pleased to suppose that the Spirit moved them to it. The apostles opposed the false prophets, that arose in their time, by epistles, by messages, and by revisiting the churches they had themselves founded, but often without effect, and always with much difficulty, as we may judge by that which PAUL found to maintain his authority in the church of Corinth, and in others.

ONE would think that the gifts of the Spirit, among which this of prophesying or preaching held a first place, should not only have supplied the want of all other knowledge, and have put to silence the most learned and eloquent, but should have established, by the influence and energy of one and the same Spirit, one and the same system of faith and manners in the whole christian church.

This would have been the case too, it must have been so necessarily, if all those who pretended to gifts of the Spirit had really had them; and it has always seemed to me that ORIGEN answered CELSUS very poorly, when, to justify or excuse the variety of opinions and sects among Christians, he urges those that abounded among the heathen philosophers. But many thought they had these gifts of the Spirit who had them not, many pretended to have them who knew they had them not; and it grew so easy to impose the belief of them on the multitude, that SIMON, who had offered to buy them, might think himself well off that bargain perhaps, and that the other heretics who arose might not find any want of them to establish their sects. The belief that they had them was easily wrought by sham miracles, by seeming or real austerity of life, by discourses filled with false sublime about spiritual beings and metaphysical or supernatural doctrines, and by other proofs of the same equivocal sort, in an age when enthusiasm was the epidemical disease, and when one great revelation gave occasion and pretence to so many little ones. That such was the temper of the age, and such the character of those who professed christianity in it, will appear the less doubtful to us, if we call to mind the several apocalypses that were current among the primitive Christians, the apocalypse or revelation of St. JOHN and that of CERINTHUS, for instance, if they were not the same, and if the reveries of a mad judaising Christian have not got into the canon under the apostle's name: the apo-

calypse of St. PETER, that of St. PAUL, and that of St. THOMAS likewise, all of which are now lost, and have been so long; but the style and matter of which may be guessed at with sufficient assurance by the style and matter of that which we have in our hands. That the apostles, to whom these are ascribed, were not the authors of them may well be. But the authors of them were Christians; and if all the fathers and churches did not receive them, as all did not receive the apocalypse admitted into our canon, yet many did, and that is sufficient for my purpose, especially when it is joined to so many other instances of enthusiasm as the first Christians gave, which cannot be denied, tho the terms may be changed, and madness and phrensy may be called divine illumination, mystical rapture, or holy zeal.

THE names alone of those who held different opinions concerning the most important points of christianity, and formed different sects, would fill a very long roll; and even a summary account of their doctrines would fill a treatise much larger than I design this essay shall be. Besides which, I am far from believing the greatest part of the absurdities, profanations, and impieties imputed to them by IRENAEUS, EPIPHANIUS, CLEMENT of Alexandria, EUSEBIUS, and others, some as ancient, and some more modern. What credit and what respect soever fathers and ecclesiastical writers may deserve on other subjects, sure I am that they deserve none when they speak of those who dif-

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ferred from them, and on whom, for that sufficient reason, the brand of heresy had been once fixed. The parties of such men were their judges : and we know them only by the passionate accusations which their enemies brought, and the severe sentences which they pronounced. Even the writings against opinions that prevailed after long contests, and contests sometimes of dubious issue in the church, as well as the writings against christianity itself, were stifled in their birth, or destroyed afterwards, by the vigilance of the orthodox, and the zeal of emperors who exerted their whole authority for this purpose ; instances of which are to be found, in the theodosian code particularly. Nothing can be therefore more uncharitable, nor more unjust, for charity and justice are due to the dead, as well as to the living, than to join in the common cry against the heretics, that arose in the first and succeeding ages of the church ; to do this implicitly on the most suspicious testimony, and to do it in the full extent of abominations and absurdities imputed to them by ecclesiastical writers. I shall decline this proceeding, tho the custom be so established, and so sanctified in opinion, that he who declines it runs the risk of becoming an object of the same uncharitableness and injustice.

MANY accusations have been brought by Christians against Christians, that carry on their front as evident marks of calumny, as any of those which the heathen brought against the whole body of Christians, in the rage of party and the fury of persecution. The former seem even to have been
invented

invented on the latter, and they were applied to the same cruel use wherever the orthodox had power for it. The Carpocratians, or the Montanists, or both, for both were comprehended in the general appellation of Gnostics, lay under the imputation of drawing blood from infants, and making up the sacramental bread with it. Can we doubt that this idle tale took it's rise from another, which the heathens propagated against the Christians, whom they accused of sacrificing children and eating their flesh? That the celebration of nocturnal mysteries among the Christians might give occasion to some debauch, as it had done among the Pagans, we may believe. But that the promiscuous, nay incestuous use of women was a religious institution of any sect, or that the Nicholaites prescribed this use of them on every friday, as one of the necessary means of salvation, I believe no more than I do the silly story, as circumstantial as it is, which TERTULLIAN refutes, of a dog tied to a candlestick in the love-feasts of Christians, which he pulled down and extinguished by catching at a piece of bread thrown out of his reach; after which, not only other devout persons mingled together in the dark promiscuously, but even fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, in one common incest.

THESE objections, and such as these, should not have been made by the orthodox, out of a regard to truth; nor should others have been insisted on as much as they were, perhaps in point of pru-

dence. The Simonians were reputed magicians, like the founder of their sect. So were the Carpo-
 cratians, the Valentinians, and others. They pre-
 tended to charms and enchantments, to command
 the good, to constrain the evil spirits, and to exer-
 cise all the imaginary powers of this kind, which
 were believed in a superstitious age, under the
 notion of magic natural and theurgic. The im-
 position was gross, no doubt, and the practice a
 cheat. But if we had in our hands the apologies
 of these heretics, as we have those of the orthodox,
 I suspect that we should find the former ready to
 justify, or to excuse, themselves by the example of
 the latter. They might quote, unjustly indeed,
 but plausibly at that time, the precept of St.
 JAMES *, and the practice of the church, as an
 example of both kinds of magic in one. The
 apostle directs, that prayers should be said over the
 sick, and that they should be anointed with oil in
 the name of the Lord; the effect of which cere-
 mony was to be the cure of their infirmities, and
 the remission of their sins. Your pretended ca-
 tholic church employs it so late, that, tho you be-
 lieve piously that it serves for the remission of sins,
 you cannot discover, by experiment, whether it
 serves as effectually to the cure of diseases. But
 in the primitive church, the remedy was employed
 for both, and the sick took it betimes. It was a
 secret, might the apologists of heresy say, both of
 natural and theurgic magic: and they might pre-
 tend that several such had been discovered by

* Chap. v.

them,

them, or by their illuminated masters. They might proceed farther, and quote all the pompous things that christian apologists used to advance concerning the power they pretended to exercise daily over demons, whom they conjured, subdued, and expelled out of the bodies of men, when all the exorcisms of the heathens had failed. The apologists of these heresies, who writ later, might urge still greater authorities to justify their pretensions. They might appeal, for instance, to the constant and universal practice of their adversaries themselves, even in that age, who admitted neither children nor persons grown up to baptism, till the impure spirits were driven from them by exorcisms, and by the holy blowings of priests upon them: which superstitious ceremony was brought gravely as a proof in the dispute with the Semi-pelagians about grace, and was supposed necessary to precede baptism, as baptism grace.

THE truth is, that several of the superstitious notions, institutions, and customs of the eastern and egyptian nations crept into christianity, round about through judaism at first, and afterwards directly. Every one took of this tinsel, as I called it above, what he liked best, or what he thought might be best adjusted to improve the christian system. This was done by jewish converts, in the spirit of the cabala, which taught them, under the pretence of explaining, to create mysteries where there were none; and by heathen converts, in the delirious spirit of metaphysics,

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fics, which they had caught from the pythagorean and platonic philosophy. It was common to all Christians. It was not confined to those, who were called heretics because they differed from those who assumed the title of orthodox. If the former assumed the pompous title of Gnostics, and despised the first preachers of christianity as ignorant and illiterate men, the latter grew Gnostics soon, without assuming the title, tho CLEMENT of Alexandria maintained that to be a good Christian it was necessary to be a good Gnostic. Thus ignorance and learning conspired to turn the plainest religion that ever was into a chaos of theology, from which it has never been reduced again to an uniform, consistent, and intelligible system. It seems too that the teachers of it have never designed that it should be so reduced; for they have proceeded, in every age, as if religion was intended, says the author of Hudibras very sensibly, in his burlesque style, for nothing else but to be mended. God drew light out of darkness: men have drawn darkness out of light; and whilst many have pretended to be their guides, they have wandered different ways without any guide at all: for it is in this case most true, that the blind have led the blind, and they have all fallen, some into one ditch, some into another. All have pretended submission to the authority of God. All without exception, orthodox as well as heretics, have submitted, in truth, to the authority of man. Numberless human institutions have divided a world that the divine might have

have united; and, instead of universal peace, founded on universal benevolence, the natural effect of the latter, they have caused and maintained perpetual discord, hatred, wars, persecutions, and massacres. I said that christianity became a chaos of theology, and the image is proper. It has been composed of jarring elements ever since.

nulli sua forma manebat,
Obstabatque aliis aliud.

THESE divisions and contentions were so general in the primitive church, that St. JEROM supposes them to have given occasion to the institution of bishops: and I will observe by the way, that I may make my court to your clergy and ours, that even on this hypothesis bishops may be reckoned of apostolical institution; since the reason of instituting them commenced in the days of the apostles. This reason was, according to St. JEROM*, because there would be otherwise as many schisms as priests, and because every one of these, drawing men to his private opinions, which was, I believe, the original meaning of the word heresy, the church of CHRIST would be otherwise broken†. Those assemblies, which we call councils, had been convened for the same purpose, in imitation of that which was held at Jerusalem, and wherein the schism breaking out at Antioch, and fomented or authorised, at least, by the op-

* Adv. LUCIF.

† Ad EVAG.

position of PETER and PAUL, was compromised. But neither of these means proved effectual. Bishops quarrelled, disputed, intrigued, when they stood single: and when they assembled in councils, they anathematized, that is, they cursed and damned one another. Various gospels, various epistles, were current. They were all received, in some of the churches at least. What they contained, that are not come down to us, we know not. But we may well believe that they gave occasion to diversity of opinions, since we know that the boasted chain of tradition was not uniform in some of the most important points, and since we know that the disputes which arose in christian congregations, of how great or how little moment soever, were pushed with the utmost violence. The dispute just mentioned could not regard essentials; for about essentials the prince of the apostles could not err, nor would have yielded to a new comer who had never conversed with the Lord, and who could pretend to no more of the gifts and illuminations of the Spirit than himself. Such again was the dispute about the celebration of easter, in which, trifling as it was, much acrimony was shewn, many synods were held, and a * bishop of Rome was on the point of excommunicating all the churches of Asia. I cite no more of this sort, which regarded chiefly discipline and outward observances, wherein there were some who affected greater evangelical purity, some who asserted evangelical liberty, and some who practised a sort of

* VICTOR.

spiritual licentiousness. But I proceed to observe that other disputes arose, wherein the most essential points of christianity were supposed to consist. These were disputes about faith more than works; and tho such of the disputants, as grew by time, accident, management, or violence, to be reputed orthodox, damned those who differed from them; yet the points on which they differed were so undeterminable by revelation, and so incomprehensible to reason, that they remain, after all the mischief they have done, still undetermined for want of any criterion. Of the disputes about grace, predestination, free-will, election, reprobation, sanctification, justification, and other sublime theological doctrines which St. PAUL pretended to teach and to explain, and which it were to be wished that no man had presumed to teach after that great apostle, since they appeared obscure even to St. PETER, I shall say nothing. It will be sufficient that I say something of the opinions that were entertained, and of the disputes that arose, in the primitive church, concerning the divine and spiritual natures.

Now concerning these particularly we must observe that they were derived much more from the heathen, than the jewish theology. As much use as the latter made of angels in their scriptures, and as fond as some writers have been to make MICHAEL pass for a second essence in the trinity, and GABRIEL for a third, it has been the opinion of learned men that the Jews did not know, before

fore the captivity, so much as the names they gave to these heavenly messengers, after it. But to begin higher, and at the first principle of all theology. It has been shewn, in one of these essays, on grounds of very great probability, that the one Supreme Being was known to the heathens, that he was acknowledged even by those among whom polytheism and idolatry prevailed, and that he was worshipped too wherever a crowd of imaginary divinities, that superstition introduced, did not intercept this worship. It must be confessed that this happened sooner or later in all those countries to which our traditions extend. They had ungenerated and generated, supercelestial and celestial gods, whole gods and half gods, and angels and demons, and genii and spirits, and souls, in all their systems of theology. This monstrous assemblage made the object of vulgar adoration. But we know that philosophers thought more reasonably at all times, or that their inward doctrine was less absurd than their outward, and that theism was taught more purely, and that religion was made more intellectual by those of them who refined on this gross theology, like PYTHAGORAS and PLATO, whose philosophy had spread during some centuries before christianity began, and was taught in the famous school of Alexandria, both when it began and long after. From this school there came some of the greatest advocates, and some of the greatest enemies of christianity, some of the greatest saints, and some of the greatest heretics. It could

could not happen otherwise, for many reasons, and among the rest for this. The sect of POTAMO was established at this time, and the mode of chusing particular opinions in every sect, without an entire attachment to any one, was prevalent, as it has been said, I think, already. This mode had a great influence on the christian system. Many instances of it might be produced. That of ORIGEN may stand for all. He was zealous, but learned. He applied himself to the study of the scriptures, and took infinite pains to establish the text, and fix the sense of them: but he was imbued so strongly with cabalistical and metaphysical notions and habits, that he taught many whimsical doctrines, and gave much advantage to men every way his inferiors, to such as JEROM among the antients, and such as BEZA among the moderns.

CHRISTIANS who formed their opinions concerning the Supreme Being in this school, or out of it, on the best principles of heathen theology, formed them very different from those of the Jews. They went into extremes on both sides. The Jews believed not only the monarchy of God over all being, but his unity; and were famous for their aversion to polytheism and idolatry, at least after their seventy years captivity. If they had not received this faith from their patriarchs, they might have learned it from the Egyptians. Nay their patriarchs might learn it by their commerce with this people. I do not say
that

that they did. But this I say, that it is more easy to shew how they might, than divines have found it to give a sufficient reason why MOSES, who took so many institutions from Egypt, of much less importance and efficacy towards the good government of a rebellious and obstinate people, neglected to inculcate the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards and punishments; which other legislators, who were not more learned than he was in all the learning of the Egyptians, took from them, and employed to the best purposes. But altho the conceptions, which the Jews entertained of the Supreme Being, were thus far very orthodox in the eye of reason, and altho their psalmists and their prophets strained their imaginations to express the most elevated sentiments of God, of his works, and of the methods of his providence; yet this eternal, this infinite being was represented in their histories, and in the whole system of their religion, as a local tutelary deity, carried about in a trunk, or residing in a temple; as an ally, who had entered into a covenant with their fathers; as a legislator, who had writ their laws with his own hand; as a king, who had actually held the reins of their government; and as an industrious magistrate, who descended into all the particulars of religious and civil administration, even into the most minute and meanest. Thus were the Jews accustomed to familiarise themselves with the Supreme Being, and to imagine that he familiarised himself with them; to think him constantly employed

ployed about them, as about the nation he had chosen for his elect and favorite people, and to figure him to themselves receiving their sacrifices, and listening to their prayers, sometimes at least as grossly, as LUCIAN represents JUPITER. This will appear in the eye of reason to be one extreme.

THE other carries a greater appearance of reverence to the Supreme Being, but is little less absurd : and whilst the direct tendency of the former notions was to promote superstition, and to make God the object of it, the indirect tendency of those I am going to mention was to promote polytheism and idolatry. It would not be to the purpose to collect many things, which pagan monotheists have said of the Supreme Being. PLATO himself would have done well, notwithstanding the sublime expressions concerning the divine nature, which are to be found in his writings, to keep the reserve on this subject which he professes in one of his letters : and, upon the whole, the heathen and christian divines both would have done much better than they did, if they had followed more closely and more constantly the example of SIMONIDES, who owned himself unable, after several delays, to answer the question HIERO put to him, “ Quid aut qualis “ esset Deus.” The divine nature cannot be explained by human words ; for it cannot be conceived by human ideas : and therefore none but delirious metaphysicians, who employ words, that

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impose by their sound and have no determinate ideas
affixed to them, will ever attempt this explanation.
All that the wit of man can do is to speak
cautiously and reverently of it, according to those
general notices of wisdom, and power, and majesty,
and all other perfections, which we are able
to collect *à posteriori*, that is, from the works of
God, and which serve still more to shew our ignorance
than our knowledge.

SENSIBLE of this, the heathen divines in their
sober moods represented the Supreme Being as
hidden from us in the depths of darkness, or in
excess of light; a first self-existent cause of all
existence; a real being, but above all essence, really
intelligent, but above all intelligence: and, lest
such notions as these should carry men not only to
think very truly of the incomprehensibility of
God, but to imagine, according to the grossness
of their conceptions, that the Creator was too far
removed from his creature, the workman from
his work, and the governor from the governed,
the heathens invented a chain of beings from God
to man, and a more extensive system of divine
natures. The Jews had brought the first and only
God, that they acknowledged, too near to man,
and had made him an actor immediately and
personally, as it were, in the creation and in the
government of the world. This was too absurd
for heathen divines. It could never enter into the
conception of such as PLATO, for instance, who
declared, or made the first God declare in the *Ti-*
maeus,

maeus, that the whole animal world must have been necessarily immortal if it had been an immediate effect of the first cause. The same men would have deemed it a profanation, as well as an absurdity; and to avoid both one and the other, they assumed all those inferior gods, and ministering spirits, which became the objects of so much idolatry.

THE pythagorean and platonick schools imagined two sorts of emanations from the Supreme Being, as it has been hinted. Some of these were supposed to go out of the deity, and to be participating beings. So they were called: and this class was numberless; since it contained all the inferior and younger gods, and all the spiritual beings, from the soul of the world, which PROCLUS, or one of the same mad tribe, calls the elder sister, down to the soul of man, which he calls the younger sister. Other emanations, two only, were assumed to remain in the deity, and to be emanations that do not emanate, goings out that do not go out, the Logos or first mind, the Psyche or the first soul; one of whom was the Nous of ANAXAGORAS, the Demiurgus or the maker of the world, and the other a living self-moving principle, that gives life and motion to all that lives and moves. This was a trinity in the godhead, or this was the godhead, the “To
“theion,” such as several of the latter Platonists, who turned dogmatists, and laid aside the name of academicians, conceived it to be. True it is,

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that scarce any two of the heathen trinitarians held the same language, no nor any one of them in two different places. It was the language of men who rambled from one arbitrary hypothesis to another; and what I am to observe particularly here is, that altho they spoke sometimes of the monade, or first unity alone, as God, yet they ascribed often so much to the second god, that the first became in some sort a non-entity, an abstract or notional being, a being and no being; without essence or nature, because above them; and rather an intelligible, than an intelligent principle. Thus they left, in some sort, no place to the one true God in their conceptions, whilst they endeavoured to raise him above all conception; and whilst some, like the Jews, employed him too much and in too trifling a manner in the formation and government of the world, they banished him almost entirely out of the system of his works.

I HAVE mentioned these notions the rather, because their indirect tendency in their opposition to judaism is to promote polytheism and idolatry, as I said above; and because, notwithstanding this tendency, they come the nearest to those that prevailed most in the christian church, to those particularly that remained unfixed during three centuries, and that required the greatest efforts of human authority to reduce them, when they were fixed, into one uniform profession. On all these accounts

accounts it is proper to speak a little more largely of them.

SECTION XXVII.

I HAVE spoken somewhere of the ditheistical doctrine. It was very antient, no doubt, tho not so universally professed as PLUTARCH represents it to have been. OROMASDES and ARIMANIUS were the good and the bad principle among the Persians; OSIRIS and TYPHON among the Egyptians. PYTHAGORAS has been suspected, not convicted, of holding this doctrine; for by his Duad, or evil principle, he might mean nothing more, than matter: and PLATO did only seem to lay some foundation for it by his hypothesis concerning the original of evil. CERDON, or MARCION, or some of the Gnostics, introduced it into christianity: and the sect who held it continued under the names of Manicheans and Paulicians from the third till the end of the ninth century. As repugnant as this doctrine is to our most clear and best determined ideas, it seemed to account for the existence of evil, as well as good, and for the supposed irregular, unjust distribution of them, consistently with the belief of a Supreme Being infinitely good. This was enough for such arabian and persian philosophers, as SCYTHIANUS, TEREBINTHUS, or MANES, and indeed for most other philosophers, in ages when a little superficial plausibility was sufficient to convert any hypothesis, against the evidence of reason, into a

dogma. I have recalled it in this place, because it leads me to make two observations, that will cast some light, the second especially, on the obscure and confused theology of which we are going to make mention. The tritheistical doctrine appears then to be as antient as the ditheistical, that is, more antient than our most antient traditions, not only by many direct proofs, but even by this, that the primitive ditheists seemed to borrow from the other system when, to improve their own, some of them altered it so far as to place a mediating principle between the good and the evil god. A strange kind of tritheism surely, or rather a system which partook of both, and was neither. We may observe, in the next place, that the second god of the ditheists kept his rank but ill, and was degraded, from a co-equality and co-eternity with the first, to be an inferior, a created, a fallen being. He was, indeed, even in this state a very powerful being; since he could transport the Son of God from the desert to the top of the temple, and afterwards to that of an high mountain. That JESUS had fasted forty days and forty nights, and that he was hungry, ought not to lessen our admiration of this diabolical strength; since we are not to consider it as bodily, but as spiritual strength, and this the Son of God could exert, as it appeared by his miracles, tho he was in the body. The devil, notwithstanding this circumstance, of which he could not be ignorant, confided so much in his own strength, and was so impudent, that he tempted him,

him, that he tauntingly quoted passages of the scripture to him, as JESUS quoted some to the devil, and, in short, that he insulted him so far as to bid him fall down and worship him*. These facts must needs give us a very high opinion of the rank which the principal devil held among spiritual natures, and may induce us to think that the devils, over whom the Christians exercised so much power afterwards, were devils of inferior sort: such as SCYTHIANUS, TEREBINTHUS, and other magicians used to invoke from the tops of houses; in which exercise the two I have named fell down and broke their necks, according to EPIPHANIUS, or one of them at least. But still the devil, the first and greatest of the diabolical society, was a degraded being. He began to be so among the Pagans. Such the Christians allowed him to be: and he would have passed no longer for a first principle, nor a god self-existent and independent any where, if the heretics here spoken of had not revived and propagated this abominable opinion.

THE very contrary happened in the tritheistical system, after the establishment of christianity: and the second and the third divine hypostases grew by degrees not only into a similitude of nature, a co-equality and co-eternity, but into a sameness with the first. Let us descend into some particulars concerning the original and progress

* — Si cadens adoraveris me. MATTH. chap. iv.

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of this theology. If it is matter of curiosity, it is
matter of importance too.

I SAID that the pagan doctrine of a trinity
was more antient than tradition. But, if we could
believe those ingenious persons, who find what-
ever they have a mind to find in the Bible, we
should believe it to have been not a pagan but a
jewish doctrine, not a philosophical hypothesis,
but a divine revelation, not only older than tra-
dition, but as old as the memorials MOSES had of
the creation. We are told in the first chapter of
Genesis, that when God closed the work of the
creation, he said, "Let us make man after our
"image and likeness*:" and altho he is made to
speak, on the same subject, in the singular num-
ber, immediately afterwards, yet christian divines
assure us that the Father addressed himself in these
words to the Son and Holy Ghost, or to the first
of them at least, and not to angels, or any in-
ferior intelligences, as he is said to have done in
the Timaeus of PLATO. This difference may de-
serve our observation the more, because PLATO in
his writings acknowledged a trinity; whereas there
is no direct nor clear hint, and much less any ex-
press declaration, of a trinity in this place, nor in
any other part of the writings of MOSES. There
are indeed, among a multitude of vague and ob-
scure expressions in the books of the Old testa-
ment, some that seem to intimate, like this, a plu-

* *Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem no-
stram.*

ality of divine beings : and these have been hawled to signify the christian trinity, tho they were too equivocal and too dark to serve the purpose of leading men to the discovery of it, and therefore to serve any purpose at all. But the divines I have mentioned would do well to consider that they have a much less right to conclude that the authors of these books, wherein the unity of the godhead is every where established, meant to teach a plurality of hypostases in it, which they assert, than any man would have to conclude from passages, that speak of God in the singular number, in books where polytheism is constantly asserted, that these authors meant to teach the unity of the godhead ; which these divines deny that they did. He who is persuaded, as I am, that many of those, who were polytheists in one sense, were monotheists in another, might assert the latter proposition without any absurdity. But these divines cannot assert either without the greatest, and especially since they know in how vague and loose a sense the word god is employed in the scriptures, where it signifies sometimes a king or a chief magistrate, a prophet, or a messenger from God, as we find in Exodus *, in Samuel †, in the Psalms §, in the Gospel of St. JOHN ||, and perhaps in other places.

BUT, besides, if the doctrine of a trinity was found in express terms in the Pentateuch, we might

* Exod. chap. iv. ver. 16. Ibid. chap. vii. ver. 1.

† 1 SAM. chap. xxviii. ver. 13. § Psalm lxxxi.

|| Gosp. St. JOHN chap. x. ver. 34.

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be surpris'd, with some reason, that MOSES had taught it to a people so strongly addicted, as the Israelites were, to the worship of many gods, and so little able to conceive the equality of three to one, and of one to three, a trinity in an unity, and an unity in a trinity; to a people to whom he would not teach the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and of a future state, on account of the many superstitions which this doctrine had begot in Egypt, as we must believe, or believe that he knew nothing of it, or assign some whimsical reason of this omission. But even in this case, which supposes an express mention of the trinity in the Pentateuch, we could frame no conclusive argument to prove this doctrine mosaical in it's origin. The religion, as well as government, of the Egyptians was more antient than that of MOSES. He was learned in both; he borrowed from both; and no man of common sense can believe it more probable, whatever he may pretend, that the slaves instructed their masters, than that the masters instructed their slaves. If an express mention of the trinity was made in other parts of the Old testament, the argument would be still less conclusive, because the Jews had been acquainted with schools wherein this doctrine was taught, either as an hidden or public doctrine, long before these books were renewed by ESDRAS, I use bishop HUET's * expression, before some of them were writ perhaps, and before the canon of them was

* In Demon. evang. "instauravit."

completed, we know very certainly neither by whom nor when.

IF this doctrine was not mosaical, neither was it platonical in it's origin, and much less was it invented by the latter Platonists in imitation of the christian trinity. PLATO speaks of one most simple being, the first intelligible. He speaks of a first mind, and a first soul, that soul of the world, some materials of which were left by God in the bowl †, in which he made it, to be mingled up into the souls of men; for it was but reasonable that the soul of man should be less perfect than the soul of the universe. That PLATO was sincerely a dogmatist I am far from believing, and I have on this head more regard to TULLY than to St. AUGUSTIN. But the latter Platonicians, who were such, taught this doctrine, like others of his theological and metaphysical whimsies, for in him and them they were whimsies, in that style. They were often a little less intelligible than he. What we do not understand in PLATO, we must not expect to understand better in PLOTINUS, in JAMBlichus, in PROCLUS, nor in the summary of his doctrine by ALCINOUS, nor, in short, in any of those writers whose heads have been turned with pythagorean and platonic theology. It was all the unmeaning jargon of egyptian and eastern metaphysics, and it did not acquire more meaning and perspicuity among the Greeks. On the contrary, I can easily persuade myself that this jargon became still more obscure by the supposed im-

† Crater is the word MARS. FICIN. uses.

provements of grecian philosophy. But still the first principles of it, and of this doctrine in particular, were more antient than the philosophical aera in Greece. STRABO says that the colleges of the egyptian priests were desert in his time: and he lived two or three centuries sooner than PLOTINUS, PORPHYRY, and JAMBLICHUS. But there is no color to conclude from hence that the theology these priests had taught was lost and forgot when these philosophers arose among others, and the school of Alexandria flourished. There were men still famous for their knowledge, an ABAMMON, an ANEBO for instance; and JAMBLICHUS, who answered PORPHYRY's enquiries in a manner too mysterious not to be genuine, cites the authority of egyptian scriptures and traditions. The author of the Intellectual system mentions a passage, which we may well take on his word without consulting the original, wherein JAMBLICHUS speaks plainly of three divine hypostases in the egyptian theology: EICTON, an indivisible unity worshiped in silence: EMEPH, the same probably as KNEPH: and HAMMON or PTHA, or OSIRIS, an active principle that was called by different names according to the different powers and energies ascribed to it. These were the PHANES, URANUS, and CRONUS, of ORPHEUS; the three gods praised by the Pythagoricians. These were the three kings, the first good, the first mind, and the first soul, of PLATO: PYTHAGORAS had been instructed in the orphic mysteries by AGLAOPHEMUS: and PLATO was the next who received a perfect knowledge of all these di-
vine

vine things out of the pythagoric and orphic writings, according to the testimony of PROCLUS, in the first of his six books concerning the platonic philosophy.

Thus it appears that the notion of a trinity made a part of egyptian theology, and had been communicated to the Greeks even by ORPHEUS, that is, five or six centuries before the babylonian captivity, and therefore long before ESDRAS, and long after HERMES. It is not worth while to make any observation on these dates, which would admit of several, nor to speak of the zoroastrian, chaldaic, or samothracian trinities any farther, than to observe that DEMOCRITUS had written a commentary on the sacred letters of the Babylonians, and that both he and HOSTANES, who lived in the time of XERXES, and was himself a Chaldean, had taught the philosophy of that people or sect to the Greeks, and that this philosophy was understood to comprehend all the learning of the east. I proceed rather to observe that this doctrine was taught with so much confusion, that the three gods were spoken of sometimes collectively, and that at other times each of them was spoken of alone. The second was sometimes, and most frequently, reputed the maker of this visible world. He was represented at other times to be to the first god what light is to the sun : and I have read that ATHANASIUS employed this comparison after the heathen divines, tho it be absurd even to ridicule in his system or in theirs. Sometimes the third

hypostasis

hypostasis was spoken of as the maker of all things according to patterns existing in the second ; and at other times only as a soul which animated the material world, and which together with it composed one mighty animal. But the general run of opinion was different and more uniform. None of these heathen trinitarians had ever imagined three gods essentially one, and one god essentially three. Whenever they spoke of three hypostases, they all supposed them distinct and subordinate. RAPIN * acknowledges that PROCLUS did distinguish them so ; but he asserts that PLOTINUS did not. Whence the jesuit took this, I am ignorant. But it is certain that far from confounding them, or saying that they were all one god, PLOTINUS has said the very contrary in many places, and particularly where he approves PLATO's explanation of the doctrine of PARMENIDES, and teaches a first, second, and third unity in subordination.

SECTION XXVIII.

SINCE I have said so much on this subject, I will just mention some of the notions which these pneumatical madmen, Heathens, Jews, and Christians, entertained concerning spiritual natures inferior to these. I observe then that an affectation of investigating and explaining the original and first principles of things was the reigning folly of antient philosophers. Thus the systems of cosmogony were, like that of HESIOD, so many

* Comp. de PLATON et ARISTOTE.

systems of theogony; and the physiology of the universe was nothing better than a wild rhapsody of fables and allegories. When these would not pass, except on the ignorant and superstitious vulgar, they proceeded to a more refined manner of philosophizing. What they could not account for by any knowledge they had of the sensible world, they endeavoured to account for by the hypotheses they framed of an intellectual world. The sensible phaenomena here below, to speak according to their conceptions, passed before them, and disappeared like the figures of a moving picture. They saw nothing permanent, nothing primarily efficient, a multitude of effects, no cause. They looked up to the heavens. Their senses were struck. They were surprised into idolatry first, they admired afterwards; and the more they examined, the more they admired. But their reason was not satisfied, nor the ends of their enquiries attained. Their reason was not satisfied, because they discovered nothing but effects above, as well as below, no self-existent, self-moving, and intelligent causes. The ends of their enquiries were not attained, because they enquired after such causes as these, instead of resolving all ultimately into the infinite wisdom and power of one first efficient cause, which is the proper conclusion of every physical enquiry. It solves every difficulty to a reasonable mind, that has enquired as far as the phaenomena lead us; and if it did not, the want of a sufficient reason in them would be no reason for seeking one out of them.

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them. It would be a reason for stopping all enquiry.

HERE we may fix the beginning of metaphysics. The ends of their researches were unattainable. Physics could not reach to them. But, instead of abandoning these objects, philosophers resolved to change their method, to begin where they had hoped in vain to end, and to invent what they had flattered themselves that they should discover. For this purpose the ideas of PLATO were devised, which some imagine to be the same with the numbers of PYTHAGORAS *. The first strangely absurd, the second quite unintelligible. I shall speak, therefore, of the first alone. Now the second hypostasis, or the first mind, is according to this hypothesis an architypal world, which contains intelligibly all that is contained sensibly in our world. These are the things which truly are: and the phaenomena, which appear realities to sense, are nothing more than their faint, transient, and fallacious images. These are the eternal, immutable patterns of things; not only of simple ideas which we receive, but of complex ideas which we make; not only of substances, but of modes and relations. There is a first whiteness, or a first sweetness, as there is a first pulchritude, or a first gratitude, a first bigness or a first littleness. These are, therefore, the true objects of science. Some of the heathen divines supposed every one of these

* BRUC. De convenientia numerorum PYTHAG. cum ideis PLAT.

pretended

pretended abstract ideas to be a first principle or a divine being, and there are christian divines who scruple not to talk of them as of eternal incorporeal essences, independent of God himself. PLATO erected a mystic ladder, and he makes SOCRATES advise his auditors to climb by it into the region of forms, that is, from opinion to knowledge. MALEBRANCHE has no need of it. Things out of the mind he sees in God; and concerning things in it, he interrogates the Logos.

PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had learned of their eastern masters, and had taught others, to imagine a confused multitude of spiritual natures besides these, and besides the three first principles, under the different names of gods, angels, demons, and genii, spirits above the moon, good, happy, and immortal; and spirits below the moon, where death, misery, and all that is evil resides. In this system all is intelligible above, all is sensible below. Nor was this number of gods and other spiritual natures confused alone: it was indefinite too, and liable to be increased as philosophical purposes, and public or even private superstition, required. The latter Pythagoricians and Platonists, whom I confound because their doctrines were confounded together, far from softening the gross and most palpable absurdities of which we have spoken, imagined, besides all these beings, and immaterial entities residing in the first mind, an inconceivable number of aeons, that is, of immortal spiritual beings proceeding by irradiation,

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emanation, or some other metaphysical generation,
from the first being, and inhabiting the heavens
and the stars. Thus if they did not determine the
number of spiritual natures in general, as the num-
ber of angels was not determined by the Jews,
they reduced them into determinate classes at least,
and made them more apparently, and more im-
mediately, dependent on the three hypostases that
composed their deity. These were not called gods
indeed, tho they might have passed for such, of the
generated kind at least; and tho there were some
persons who held the four first aeons to be the te-
trade of PYTHAGORAS, nay tho some were absurd
enough to call the first self-existing spirit an aeon,
that is, an emanation, and therefore a contradiction
as monstrous as that imputed to the Sabellians,
who assumed, it has been said, that God the father
was his own son, and God the son his own father.
But the word god began to be more sparingly used,
and for that reason these doctrines might be, as
they were, the more easily received by many who
professed christianity. The Jews, I suppose, might
hold these emanations, flowing from the divine es-
sence, like beams from the sun, just as well as their
ten superior lights called sephiroth; and the Chri-
stians might well admit aeons into their system, since
they, as well as the Jews, admitted cherubim and
seraphim, archangels and angels. From the hy-
pothesis, therefore, of a trinity of supreme but sub-
ordinate gods, subordinate to one another, a trinity
of ranks or orders of beings was derived: a multi-
tude of unities proceeding from the first unity, and
superior

superior to the first mind; a multitude of minds proceeding from the first mind, and superior to the first soul; a multitude of souls proceeding from the first soul, and superior to all other natures; for they dreamed too of an universal nature sometimes, I know not whether in or out of the Deity, from which all particular natures and all plastic principles flowed.

By these means sufficient provision was made for superstition and theological speculations. The same presumption, and the same misapplication and abuse of human reason, that misled the heathen, misled the christian world, and erected the most extravagant hypotheses, that delirious imaginations could frame, into dogmas concerning divine and spiritual nature. The heathen had in their power that rule of enquiry, and that criterion of truth, which God has given to all his rational creatures in the manifestation of his nature and attributes, as far as we are able to collect them from the system of his works, and from the course of his providence. It was therefore a great presumption, and a great abuse of reason, in those philosophers, to neglect this rule and this criterion; to enquire often without one, and to judge often against the other. But the christian divines have done worse. They have another rule, and another criterion, besides these, supernatural as well as natural revelation, the word as well as the works of God. One of these might carry their knowledge farther than the other, and it carries indeed this kind of knowledge, such as it is, a great way; but they were in-

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excusable when they pretended to acquire any knowledge, on such important and awful subjects especially, beyond both. They did it however. Metaphysical heathens and cabalistical Jews imposed their reveries on christian fathers ; and they imposed them on the whole christian church, mingled up with those of their own overheated brains.

BUT there is another cause of this pneumatical madness to be mentioned. It was not due alone to the fondness philosophers had of seeming to account metaphysically for what they could not account physically ; it was due likewise to a fondness of another kind, to a fondness of making man pass for one of those beings that participated of the divine nature. This had long possessed the heathen theists, and it possessed the Christians with more advantage. Neither of them pretended to such constant communications, and familiar conversations with the Supreme Being, as the Jews did ; tho both of them boasted of divine influences, of inspirations, and of revelations made to them sleeping and waking. But then both of them boasted a natural, tho distant relation, with the Supreme Being, not only the moral relation of creatures to their creator, but the natural relation of descendants to their common ancestor, a cognation, as CUDWORTH calls it, a sort of spiritual consanguinity. Several hypotheses had lengthened the chain of being very far from God downwards : and as divinity had been hawled down, humanity had
been

been hoisted up, sometimes by gross and corporeal representations, sometimes by such as were more refined and spiritual. Man was made after the image of God in more systems than one, or rather God was made after the image of man. The anthropomorphite heresy represented him with all the members, the shape, and figure of an human body; and how the idolatrous heathens represented all their gods, and none more than JUPITER himself, in human bodies, and in human operations, is enough known. But there were other systems in which the similitude and natural relation between God and man were represented under images more refined and spiritual.

IN the jewish system, however we understand the words of MOSES, the Supreme Being made the body of man of the dirt of the earth. But the human soul was a portion of divine breath, “*divinae particula aerae*.” God breathed it into his face, and he became a living soul *; as God is said, in scripture language, to be the living God. In the platonic system, inferior intelligences were commissioned to make the whole animal kind, lest they should have been all immortal; but God reserved to himself the soul of man, which he made of the same substance as the soul of the universe, only a little less perfect, as it has been said. In the system we speak of, the divinity is allied to humanity as effectually as the pride of man could desire, as ef-

* *Inspiravit in faciem ejus spiraculum vitae, et factus est homo in animam viventem.*

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fectually as in either of these. We assume, and the latter Platonicians as well as their founder assumed, that man is compounded of body and soul. As PLATO asserted that all souls were made at once, so they asserted that all souls were made of the same nature. Human souls, therefore, proceeding from the first soul, which was sometimes confounded with, and sometimes distinguished from, the soul of the universe, and this soul being superior to all natures, except the minds proceeding from the first mind, and the unities proceeding from the first unity, the relation between God and man was not very remote; whether they thought that the three hypostases composed one deity, as two substances composed one man; or whether they thought that the three were distinct subordinate subsistencies, and the soul the lowest of them. The relation, I say, was not very remote either way; and these philosophers might think their hypothesis the more decent for not making this relation closer. PROCLUS, therefore, or PLOTINUS, or one of that tribe, had reason, you see, on this plan of theology, to call the soul of the world the elder sister of the human soul: and if ORIGEN did not come fully up to all these extravagances, he came very near to them, when he asserted that there was no difference, but that of merit, between the souls of archangels and angels, of devils and of men. The soul of CHRIST, according to this father, who was perhaps the greatest of the fathers, was of the same nature as all other rational souls, and was inseparably united with
God,

God, or made one with the Word *, only on account of superior merit in a pre-existing state.

Thus human pride, as well as human curiosity, was indulged by heathen philosophers and by platonising Christians. They grew up into a sort of pneumatical madness, or metaphysics were the dotage of physics: take which of the images you please. What these wild or dreaming philosophers could not do by any hypothesis about body, they attempted to do by the hypothesis of a soul: and, since they could not make man participant of the divine nature by his body, however animated up to rationality, or with whatever adventitious powers they might suppose it endued, they thought fit to add a distinct spiritual to his corporeal substance, and to assume him to be a compound of both. A great variety of hypotheses was built on this one; but immortality was common to them all. In all of them, man was allied to God by some metaphysical genealogy: and even those of them, which, giving him immortality, exposed him to eternal damnation by it, were fondly received. He who considers what our manner of knowing is, what the faculties of our minds are, what the means we have of acquiring knowledge are; and how uncertain, how precarious, how confined it is in the highest degree of it; will think the soul as unfit to be participant of the divine nature as the body. Nay PLATO, whom I

* — inseparabilem cum Deo fecerit unitatem — cum Verbo Dei unum efficitur. ORIG. De princip. lib. i.

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quote on these occasions, instar omnium, was so little able to prove the existence and immortality of the soul, and talked so much nonsense about the essence and essential properties of it, that he was obliged to have recourse from natural to moral arguments, which are indeed more plausible, but not more conclusive.

WHEN these notions were once established, it was no hard matter to persuade men, nay it was no hard matter for those, who had a disposition and a temper of brain prone to enthusiasm, to persuade themselves, that by various methods of purification, and by intense meditation, which were in truth so many methods of growing mad, they could abstract themselves from all sensible objects, wrap themselves up in pure intellect, and be united to the Supreme Being. This madness has prevailed, and still prevails, under some form or other, and with little difference, in the east and in the west, among Christians and heathens, among the orthodox and heretics. I need not quote instances. They have been frequent and notorious in China, in the East Indies, and in Europe. PYTHAGORAS and PLATO taught that the supreme good of men was to be like God, and to be gods at last. Such opinions as these were held, with some variety of expression more than of substance, by the Manicheans and other heretics. The most orthodox fathers spoke of the communion of men with God, as of a mystery unknown indeed to men and angels till it was revealed, but suspected by the heathen

heathen philosophers, who were impelled to desire it by a natural instinct. A strange assertion this must appear, and equally false in every part. The communion of man with God was not a suspicion, it was a dogma, true or false, and an article of the platonic faith: for PLATO, too, required faith in traditional doctrines. It was not any particular instinct, that impelled the heathen to desire this communion; it was their pride and absurdity, the very human affections and passions from which these men pretended to be freed, that produced this presumptuous desire.

SUCH extravagant doctrines concerning divine and spiritual natures being taught with much confusion in the schools of heathen theology, they could not fail to be taught in those of christianity with the same confusion, and to produce all the different opinions, that divided the christian church. None of them knew very distinctly what they meant by the word spirit and spiritual substance, which were so often in their mouths. That they meant in general nothing more than breath, like animal breath, and a thin subtile matter that escaped human sight in the ordinary way of seeing, is evident. They said after ZOROASTER and the magi, that God was original light, or an intelligent fire. They said that this light was incorporeal; and yet they talked of it in such a manner as described a very corporeal light, invifible, however, to all eyes that were not fortified like those that enjoy the beatific vision. In short,

short, spirituality did not imply incorporeity ; and if one of those great divines was at hand to be asked what he meant by spiritual substance, he would answer in some metaphysical jargon ; he would tell us, perhaps, that it is a substance “ ab essentialitate succisa,” which are words I have read, but cannot translate.

SECTION XXIX.

BUT it is time I should return to speak of the trinity, and to shew what discordant opinions arose about it among the Christians ; for among the heathens, tho there were different opinions, yet it was rather a secret doctrine, in which philosophers instructed their scholars behind the curtain, than a doctrine which they published to all men indifferently. Now it is impossible to conceive any thing more monstrous than some of these opinions, or more litigated, or longer unsettled than others. The least we have to observe of this kind is about the first hypostasis, and yet something of this kind is to be observed about that. For instance, tho we cannot explain God’s manner of being, and tho to attempt it is unpardonable presumption, yet we may, and we must assert, that he is not a system of matter ; because there arise, from the contrary supposition, a multitude of absurdities, that cannot destroy the demonstration of his existence, but that are inconsistent with it : notwithstanding which, the fathers of the church spoke of him sometimes in such terms,

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that

that to make out any sense in what they said, we must understand them to have thought him material, at least not immaterial; and what they thought him then, it is not possible to conceive.

BUT the various doctrines that were taught about the second and third hypostasis, the second especially, are still more beyond all conception extravagant and profane. Concerning these, and one or two more, it is necessary that I should descend into some particulars, in order to shew, not only that private authority has imposed private opinions, that is, heresies, but that public authority, the authority of the whole christian church, has imposed opinions which, are, therefore, deemed orthodox; altho many of them are as absurd as any of those which are deemed heretical, many of them as disputable, many of them as little warranted by the Gospel, and many of them as incompatible with true theism; because if they do not deny God, they do something as bad, nay worse in PLUTARCH's sense and in common sense, they defame him. From a consideration of some few of these opinions and doctrines it will appear how unsafely we trust, in matters of religion, to the authority of other men, which may lead us, and has led all those who have submitted to it, under pretence of making them better Christians, to be little if at all better than atheists. From a contemplation of the consequences of these opinions and doctrines it will appear that theology has made Christianity ridiculous to men
of

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of sense, I mean the christianity that has been
established by ecclesiastical and civil authority;
and a perpetual bone of contention to fools. It
will appear that the atheistical objection to reli-
gion, which has been mentioned, groundless as it
is, receives a color from the inventions and the
conduct of that order of men, who have arrogat-
ed to themselves, exclusively of all others, the
name and the power of a church, and whom Chri-
stians are accustomed to think and to call the
church.

THERE have been reports, for such stories de-
serve to be esteemed no more, that SIMON, who
was a samaritan, declared himself among that
people to be the Father, among the Jews to be
the Son, and among the Gentiles to be the Holy
Ghost; that he passed the operations of his ma-
gical art for miracles, and that he broke his neck
at last in attempting to fly before NERO, notwith-
standing which he was adored at Rome. This
latter circumstance, indeed, was founded on a
blunder that has been since detected; tho it im-
posed on JUSTIN the martyr in the second centu-
ry, and, which is much more strange, on ERAS-
MUS* in the sixteenth. MONTANUS pretended to
be the paraclete in the third century; or that God,
who had preached and suffered in CHRIST, inha-
bited by the Holy Ghost in him. The excuse he
made for coming so late, when JESUS had promi-
sed that he should come so much sooner, was the

* Vid. Ep. LCCCXXI. in IRENAEUM.

unpreparedness of the world to receive any sooner than that austerity of religious observances which he prescribed and practised. They were incredibly great, and such as may render it probable that this impostor died the death of the traitor JUDAS, that he hanged himself in a fit of despair, as christian writers have affirmed. Such tales as these would not deserve to be mentioned, if they did not serve to shew the fanatical spirit of those ages, and to take off our wonder at all the heresies that arose in the christian church, by observing how easy it was to suppose a divine mission, or even to assume in opinion a divine nature. The appearance of false prophets, as well as their success in seducing, had been foretold; and it was the character of the times which encouraged one, and promoted the other.

THESE false prophets were very numerous, and their success very various. But there was no article of christian faith and doctrine which admitted of so much doubt and dispute, as the divinity of CHRIST first, and his rank in the godhead afterwards. CERINTHUS denied his divine nature. MENANDER asserted that he was a true man. SATURNINUS, that he was only the shadow and appearance of a man. BASILIDES, that the CHRIST did not suffer, but that he took the form of another, of SIMON of Cyrene, I think, who suffered under his form whilst he stood by and laughed at his own supposed crucifixion. EBION maintained, like MENANDER, that CHRIST was a mere
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man,

man, the son of JOSEPH. In calling him a good or a just man, he had the authority of St. PETER on his side, who calls him so in one place of the Acts; and even this he did not want: but in denying his resurrection from the dead, as he did when he affirmed that the body of CHRIST remained in the grave, tho his soul went to heaven, he had this great apostolical authority against him *. In fine, and to fill up the measure of heretical phrensy, the Sethites held that the same person had been SETH first, and was JESUS afterwards; and the Ophitæ, as they were called, that he had been the serpent who tempted EVE; so that he, who redeemed mankind by his blood, had made redemption necessary by his wiles, according to these madmen.

THAT there were no madmen at the same time among the best and most orthodox Christians, if it may be said with truth that any orthodox belief was settled so soon, we must not believe. There were many such, and the proofs are at hand, both in their writings, and much more in the anecdotes concerning them. But that which deserves our particular observation is, that the madness of those who are reputed orthodox never ran so high, as it did after the orthodox belief on this great article had been settled; if propositions, the very terms of which are sometimes ambiguous and sometimes quite unintelligible, may be

* —Virum probatum a Deo, justum a mortuis suscitatum.

said to have been settled. Certain it is, that after this the orthodox fathers held such language about the incarnation of CHRIST, as many of those who were reputed heretics would have scrupled modestly and piously to have used. These words, the son of God, were understood figuratively, I presume, and not literally in the case of FOE, who assumed this appellation in India a thousand years before the coming of CHRIST; and in the case of ZOROASTER, who assumed it in Persia, perhaps, as antiently. They must have been understood even thus very falsely, in both those cases. But they might have been so understood, with some propriety of figure, in the case of CHRIST, who was at least the Messiah promised by God, foretold by the prophets, and sent in due time. If this had been the judgment of the church, the principal difficulties about his incarnation had been anticipated, as they were by the Nestorians, who held that there were two persons, and not two natures only, in CHRIST, and who denied that the virgin was the mother of God. But the church having determined that these words, the son of God, should be taken in their literal sense, it is astonishing to consider what profanations, followed concerning this second generation of the son; for the first had been before all worlds, that is, from all eternity. These profanations collected from the most approved writers alone, to say nothing of the creeds that are so solemnly recited in christian churches, would fill a volume. I shall mention a few only, which they, who are at all con-

versant

versant in the writings of antient and modern divines, will acknowledge to be fairly quoted.

It has been said then by the most orthodox*, piously and reverently too, as they and other divines assure us, “ that the Father having chosen
“ the virgin MARY for this second generation of
“ the Son, he loved her as his spouse; he employed the angel GABRIEL, whom he made his
“ pronubus or paranympheus, that is, his bride-
“ man, to procure her consent, without which
“ there can be no lawful marriage; and having
“ obtained it, his virtue overshadowed her, which
“ he tempered so that her human nature might
“ be able to support the divine embracement.
“ In this private embracement, she conceived, the
“ holy spirit flowing into her, and producing the
“ effect of human seed. Thus the child partook
“ of the two natures of his parents, the divine
“ nature of his father, and the human nature of
“ his mother.” In such gross terms, and under such gross images, has the mystery of the incarnation been explained. The words of St. AMBROSE are too obscene to be translated. Take them in latin therefore. “ Non enim, says this
modest archbishop, “ virilis coitus vulvae virginalis secreta referavit, sed immaculatum semen
“ inviolabili utero spiritus sanctus infudit.” St. AUSTIN softens the terms, and changes the image a little. But if he does not appear quite so obscene, he must appear at least as mad as the

* ERASM. adv. ep. LUTHERI.

others.

others. “ God spoke by his angel, says this
 “ faint, and the virgin was got with child by
 “ the ear*.” There were those who asserted that
 CHRIST did not assume his body in the virgin’s
 womb, but that he brought it from heaven, and
 passed through her as water passes through a
 pipe†. They were called heretics for their pains :
 and yet surely that doctrine might have been sung
 or said in the churches as decently, and with as
 much edification, as those hymns were, in one of
 which it was said that the virgin conceived,
 “ non ex virili semine, sed mystico spiramine ;”
 and in the other, that the Word or Logos entered
 at her ear, “ et exivit per auream portam.”

SUCH extravagant and profane notions and ex-
 pressions, as have been last mentioned, came into
 fashion chiefly after the nicean council, which
 CONSTANTINE thought it necessary to convene.
 How ill he judged, and how ill his successors
 judged on similar occasions, long and woful ex-
 perience has manifested. What passed before his
 time shewed that attempts to explain divine my-
 steries must be of necessity endless ; and what
 passed in and after his time, that it is to no pur-
 pose, at least to no good purpose, to impose any
 authorised definitions of them. What revelation
 leaves a mystery must remain such : and there
 cannot be a greater absurdity than to imagine that

* Deus loquebatur per suum angelum, et virgo per aurem
 impraegnabatur.

† AUG. De tem. serm. 22.

human authority, call it how you please, ought to determine, or will determine, to submission those who think that such definitions are not conformable to their true criterion, which is the revelation itself. The only difference is this. The men who dispute and wrangle on such points as these, wherein neither morality nor good government are concerned, cannot do much hurt, if they are left to dispute and wrangle among themselves; whereas, if public authority takes notice of them so far, as to meddle in their quarrels, and to decide any way, civil disorders are sure to follow, and the blood of nations is spilled in wars and massacres, to extinguish a flame which some hot-headed priest, or delirious metaphysician, has kindled, and which it does not extinguish neither.

WHAT revelation leaves a mystery must remain such: and if any thing was ever left a mystery, the doctrine of the trinity was so. CHRIST had no where called himself God. His apostles called him Lord*. PETER had once declared him to be a man: and PAUL preaching to the Athenians speaks of him rather as a man than as God. He makes no mention of the Son of God, or of the Holy Ghost. These inconsistent writers talk often a different language on the same subject, and contradict in one place what they have said in another. How they came to do so in this case, let others account; but let them account for this conduct of the apostles better than

* ERAS. ubi supra.

the greatest antient and modern divines have done. According to them, PETER was afraid of scandalising the Jews. The Jews believed one God, had never heard of the Son or Holy Ghost, and would have been revolted against christianity more than they were, if they had heard the man, whom they had seen crucified and buried, called God. PAUL was afraid of confirming the Gentiles in their polytheism by preaching to them that CHRIST was God. The prudence of this method, by which the young in CHRIST were fed with milk, and those of riper years with solid food, for the whole mystery was revealed to them, has been extremely applauded by the most approved doctors of the church. I am unwilling, however, to take this for the reason of the conduct which the two apostles held. It favours too much of an outward and inward doctrine, the double dealing of pagan divines. It seems unworthy of men commissioned by CHRIST, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and able to enforce all they taught by miracles. It bears too near a resemblance to the unrighteous cunning of the jesuits, who are said to conceal the humiliation and passion of the saviour from their neophytes in China. But whatever reason the apostles had for it, which they who boast to be their successors have no right to determine, this was their conduct. The divinity of the Word grew by slow degrees into general belief among Christians: the divinity of the Holy Ghost by degrees still slower, and the co-equality and consubstantiality of the three hy-

postases last of all. It fared with the Son, in the first ages of christianity, much as it has fared since with the mother of God. Strong figurative expressions, which the apostles employed on some, which other doctors and saints employed on all occasions, and which were animated, doubtless, by the opposition of heathens, Jews, and heretics, might contribute to exalt the Son at the expence of the Father's supremacy; as we know very certainly that, by such means and on such motives as these, the virgin acquired the title of deipara; to whom, if she is not a goddess avowed in express terms, divine honors are paid, and her intercession is implored with the Father and the Son. She is so plainly distinguished from both, that her intercession with either carries more propriety along with it, than the intercession of the Son with the Father; since these two consubstantial persons cannot be intelligibly distinguished from one another, and since it is of the utmost absurdity to advance that the same person intercedes with himself.

WHAT has been said will appear evidently true, if we look into the anecdotes of the apostolical and following ages; or if we consult, with due discernment, those who have made them their study. Many of the primitive Christians, struck with religious awe, had a very reasonable scruple of using any appellations which were not contained in the scriptures. Many of them dared not give that of the true God to CHRIST before the
nicean

nicean council, nor several after it: and even the most orthodox, who scrupled not to call him “very God of very God, begotten not made,” when the council had pronounced, were still afraid to give this appellation to the Holy Ghost. Nay from the time that the Macedonians were condemned, soon after the Arians, in another council, and even to this hour, the Holy Ghost has not been deemed God by generation, but by procession or spiration, that is, by the breathing of the Father through the Son, or by the joint breathing of the Father and the Son; of which difference in an identity of nature we must be content to say what ERASMUS said, “satis est credere.” In short, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was never taught explicitly and positively by any divine authority. It was a vague opinion in heathen theology, which intended no more perhaps, than to personify the wisdom and goodness of the supreme omnipotent Being. It has been a theological dispute in all ages among Christians: and the precise definition, according to which we are obliged to profess that we believe it, is founded on authority entirely human, and therefore undeniably fallible, imperial and ecclesiastical authority.

If it be said that the decisions in favor of the second and third hypostasis have been made by councils under the influence of the Holy Ghost, I shall only say, the question is begged ridiculously when the influence of the Holy Ghost is

supposed to prove the very point in dispute, his divinity ; and that they, therefore, must have no small share of stupidity, of ignorance, and effrontery, who can insist on such an answer in this age. If it be said that the councils, which condemned the opinions of PAUL of Samosata, of SABELLIUS, of ARIUS, of PHOTINUS, and of other heretics, were guided, in the canons they made, and the anathemas they pronounced, by the unerring rule of scripture and uniform tradition ; I shall only ask, what that scripture was ? It was not the Old testament most surely ; for there is no reason to allow that this Testament contains any notices of the trinity. Was it the New testament ? But we may defy the ablest chemist, that ever worked on those materials, to extract from them such a trinity, as that is which the christian church acknowledges. Passages, that seem favorable to it in part, may be, as they have been, produced. But then passages, that are really inconsistent with it in the whole, may be, as they have been, opposed to these : and the famous adjective *homouousios* will not be found consecrated by scripture language ; tho even this word does not signify very determinately what it has been applied to signify, if identity alone be the greatest, and similitude but a less unity, as the learned say*. As little grounds are there, in any part of the New testament, even in the epistles of St. PAUL, for that impudent analysis, which school divines and others

*—*Consimilis essentiae*. ERASM. *Identitas maxima est unitas ; minor unitas est similitudo.* MART. Lexic.

have presumed to make of the Deity when they have talked so much nonsense about processions or emanations, persons, relations, notions, or terms, and the indwelling of these divine beings in one another. Certain figurative and vague expressions, of which there are many, have been picked up here and there, and have been dragged to countenance, if that was possible, such opinions. Theology has solemnised the reveries of enthusiasm in many instances. Let me quote one that occurs immediately to me. IGNATIUS, disciple of St. JOHN, and bishop of Antioch, was brought before TRAJAN. The emperor enquired who he was. The saint answered, that he was one who had gained the friendship of the Son of God, whom he carried about in his breast; as he might well do, since it was written, “I will dwell “and walk in them.” TRAJAN condemned this theophorus, or god-carrier, to be exposed to wild beasts at Rome. It is not necessary that I should make any applications of this story to what I have said of enthusiasm and theology. Almost daily experience will make them for me.

Not only the scriptures, which are come down to us, are very far from being vouchers of the trinity we profess to believe; but we may assure ourselves that many of the scriptures and traditions, that obtained credit in the primitive ages of christianity, deposed against this trinity. Scriptures stood in opposition to scriptures, and tradition was not uniform. There were various

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gospels, and various epistles. All these were composed and altered, received and rejected, according to the different traditions, and the different systems, of evangelical history and doctrine, that prevailed in different places, and among different persons. Thus, for instance, EPIPHANIUS owns that SABELLIUS, who denied any distinction of persons in the godhead, took his doctrines from the Gospel of the Egyptians; and the Socinians of our age may boast that they derive their pedigree from PAUL of Samosata, a great bishop of the third century. This century, the latter part of it especially, may be included in that character which ERASMUS gives of the fourth, and which will suit some others. “It was matter of
“ingenuity to be a Christian. Faith was rather
“in the writings, than in the minds, of men: and
“there were almost as many creeds, as persons
“that professed christianity.” The disputes concerning the divinity of CHRIST continued from the apostolical days to these, without any ecumenical decision. Then, indeed, there was one given by the council of Nicaea; which did not however decide, for a long time, nor even at last, by scripture and tradition, but by dint of persecution, and by the force of the secular arm.

It has been said that the greatest lights, which appeared in the christian church after the apostles, appeared in and about the fourth century: to the end of which century at least I think that we protestants concur, not very wisely, with you
papists

papists in reverencing fathers and councils. This judgment I shall not contradict, however, on the present occasion. But then we must make it more impartially than it is generally made. For instance, ATHANASIUS, GREGORY of Nazianzum, CHRYSOSTOM, AMBROSIUS, AUGUSTIN, JEROM, were men of some parts and learning with extraordinary zeal. But so were ARIUS, EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia, the other EUSEBIUS of Caesarea, PHOTINUS, and MACEDONIUS. That such men as these should be divided in their opinions concerning the trinity, cannot seem strange to any person who considers the nature of this doctrine, how it came into the church, how it grew up there, and how open to dispute it remained three hundred years after CHRIST. To believe three gods, three substances essentially different, or three subsistencies, as they were called by some, in the godhead, distinct and subordinate, the second to the first, and the third to the second, was not hard on the principles of heathen theology, in which such a trinity had been taught. But on the principles of jewish and christian theology, such a belief could not be admitted without manifest inconsistency; and it is not conceivable that PHILO could reconcile PLATO and MOSES, when he talked of a second god. To save this inconsistency, and to avoid as much as possible all appearance of polytheism, several expedients were devised. Some, like SABELLIUS and his master NOETUS, denied a distinction of persons in the godhead: so that God the Father was, in the system of these heretics,

as

as it is said, his own Son, and God the Son his own Father; nay the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, suffered together in the passion and person of CHRIST, since they were but one person under three notions and appellations. Some, like PAUL of Samosata before the nicean council, and PHOTINUS at that time, or immediately after it, maintained that JESUS was called the Son of God only on account of his sanctity; that the Word descended on him, and then returned to the Father; and that he did not commence the CHRIST till he had been baptised in the Jordan.

As some were afraid of destroying the unity by the trinity, others were afraid of destroying the trinity by the unity. ARIUS thought to save both by opposing the Unitarians, who took away all distinction of persons, and the Trinitarians, who held that they were all equal. He made the distinction of persons as strong as he could, in contradiction to the former; and he was so far from acceding to the latter, that he denied the Son to be either in rank or nature equal to the Father, and the Holy Ghost to be so even to the Son. The strict Trinitarians, who became afterwards the sole orthodox, might hold the Father to be alone eternal in this sense, “quod careat origine;” for “duae personae ab ipso sunt, ipse a nullo.” So HILARIUS expressed himself. But he and the rest of them believed an eternal generation of the Son, and procession of the Holy Spirit, who had no beginning in time, tho they had an original in nature, the

the nature of the Father. The Arians, on the other hand, denied this community of nature, held the Father alone to be the Supreme God, and the Son to be the first of all creatures, but a created being. If this doctrine had become orthodox, as it did very nearly, notwithstanding the decision of the nicean council, the Macedonians would have formed no sect. The divinity of the second hypostasis failing, that of the third would have fallen of course ; which it is plain that ARIUS saw, when he urged nothing, and the nicean council added nothing to the creed concerning the Holy Ghost. But the heretics of those days were so afraid of admitting any co-equality with the Supreme Being, that they opposed the divinity of the third hypostasis, even after that of the second had been established. They were easily defeated. The same sort of proof as had served in one dispute served in the other : and tho the orthodox themselves distinguished generation from procession, yet the scripture joining the Son and the Holy Ghost so often together, and CHRIST having ordered baptism to be administered in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father and the Son, the divinity of the Holy Ghost was confirmed ; and these councils employed, very wisely, authority instead of argument. It was impossible, indeed, to shew, by any subtilty of logic, that this doctrine was not polytheistical ; since the admission of three, or of three hundred gods, is equally so. There remained, therefore, nothing to be done, but to make a mystery where they found none ;

and,

and, having decreed that there are three gods, to decree at the same time that there is but one : for so the athanasian doctrine must sound to every man who does not comprehend, and that is every man living, all the profound metaphysics that have been employed to distinguish away the apparent contradiction, unless he give his understanding up to a jargon of words, and can fancy he believes without any clear and distinct ideas.

IN this manner was the fundamental article of christianity imposed at first, without a plain and harmonical concurrence of the scriptures, or of tradition ; tho such a concurrence, at least, was necessary to make it a revealed doctrine, and of divine obligation. It continues to be imposed still : and there is but too much reason to apprehend that these theological attempts, to persuade mankind that three distinct persons in the godhead make but one God, have induced some to believe that there is no God at all : just as the pretensions of heathen philosophers to knowledge really unattainable induced several to assert that there is no knowledge at all. If I was to write the history of arianism, it would be a part of my subject to shew, with how much difficulty the orthodox doctrine prevailed against it ; how it revived often even under CONSTANTINE, much more under some of his successors ; and was, at last, drowned in the blood of those who professed it. The Athanasians and the Arians were, in some respects, like the Prasini and the Veneti. The principal difference between

between the first was in the words they used, and between the last in the colors they wore. Neither the divines, nor the chariot-drivers, were left to contend by themselves in the schools, and in the circus. Men, women, children, all the world, took part on one side or the other. The state was disordered by the circensian, and the church and the state both by the synodical contests. The civil power, which should have put both down, kept both up: and magistrates were as partial in one case, and as bigot in the other, as the vulgar. It were to be wished that the comparison would hold in one circumstance more; for, in the reign of JUSTINIAN, the Praefini and the Veneti were both abolished.

SECTION XXX.

THE accounts we have of ATHANASIUS and of ARIUS are come to us in the writings of the former, and of those of the same party, and, therefore, may be deemed extremely partial, as they are extremely violent: and yet very little sagacity is necessary to discover, even in them, that the saint had less moderation, and not less ambition, than the heretic; that he had the spirit of intrigue as much as EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia; and that he was one of those churchmen, whom pride and obstinacy of temper, under the name of zeal, render equally fit to persecute, and to bear persecution. The authority of the persons, who were at the head of this dispute, deserves, in a word, no consideration.

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deration. But as the athanasian doctrine was confirmed by the first and all other councils, except a very few, it may be proper to enquire what regard these councils deserve. Now as to that, we may say boldly, because we can prove invincibly, that they deserve none; whether we judge of them analogously to those that have been held in our time, or near it, or whether we judge of these primitive councils by what we know of them from cotemporary, and the most orthodox authority.

THE first attempt to silence ARIUS, and to condemn his doctrine, was in a provincial council held at Alexandria. The letters OSIUS carried thither from CONSTANTINE seemed calculated rather to compose and reconcile, than to animate and condemn. This was certainly the aim of EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia in whom CONSTANTINE had much confidence, that of the emperor himself, and not improbably that of OSIUS too. This council had not been unanimous in their subscriptions, and nothing had been formally decided against ARIUS in it. But yet I think that the terms, which made so much noise in the nicean council afterwards, were employed in this; the terms I mean of one nature or substance, and three persons or subsistencies: for it was grown to be a point of honor among most of the prelates and great men of the church, not to suffer that the founder of their religion should pass for any thing less than a God, even the Supreme God. This circumstance might encourage ALEXANDER, the bishop of Alexandria,
or

or rather his prompter ATHANASIUS ; and ARIUS might think it a victory not to be soon defeated. He might think that if his doctrine could stand the first brunt of opposition, it had as fair a chance of becoming orthodox as the other. Thus the dispute continued, and the disorders occasioned by it at Alexandria, where it was carried on with open violence. It spread ; it gained the court. The influence of the clergy on private conscience, and the influence of private conscience on public tranquillity, began to shew themselves in a dangerous manner. CONSTANTINE saw, and apprehended the consequences. To prevent them, he resolved to call together a general council, and to preside in it ; for so in effect he did. He flattered himself that an ecclesiastical dispute would be best determined in an ecclesiastical assembly ; and that a parcel of wrangling priests would be silenced by a synod representative of their whole order. He resolved to support their decrees, whatever they should be ; about which it is plain enough, both by the language and the conduct he held, that he was much less solicitous, than he was to have any decision that might put an end to the dispute : for which purpose there is room to suspect that he took, among others, one method, rather political than fair. I say, that there is room to suspect this. I dare say no more in opposition to that profusion of learning, which has been employed to defend the first nicean council, and to prove the doctrine of the trinity, that was settled in it, to be an ecumenical decision. Mr. SELDEN published

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in latin, from an arabian manuscript, the Antiquities of the church of Alexandria, written by EUTYCHIUS, a famous patriarch of that church in the ninth or tenth century. Now this author having given a list of these patriarchs, from HANARIAS a cobbler, who was the first of them, down to ALEXANDER, who was the eighteenth, relates that CONSTANTINE summoned a council at Nicaea to determine the dispute between this patriarch and ARIUS. The council consisted, he says, of two thousand and forty eight, whereof three hundred and eighteen were unanimous in declaring the divinity of CHRIST. The rest were divided by a great number of different opinions, sententiarum discrimine multiplici; they could not agree among themselves, but they all opposed the three hundred and eighteen. SELDEN produces two authorities more, to confirm that of EUTYCHIUS: the authority of JOSEPH, an egyptian presbyter, in his preface to a version of the councils into arabic from antient christian monuments; and that of ISMAEL IBN ALI, a mahometan historian of reputation. They speak to the same effect: and, by the concurrent testimony of all three, the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was not that of the whole council, nor of a majority of the fathers. It seems to have been rather a profession of faith drawn up by the bishop of Jerusalem for the emperor, “quam
“ descripserat ei episc. Hierosolymit.” the emperor had it read in the synod: three hundred and eighteen approved it out of the whole number: these were unanimous, the rest could agree in nothing,
“ nec

“ nec inter se concordēs, nec in fide sua.” It was necessary to the design of CONSTANTINE, therefore, that the decision of a party in the council should pass for an oecumenical decision. On the whole, there is room for the suspicion I have mentioned; for if it should be objected, that these testimonies were given some centuries after the events happened, the same objection may be made to the most approved of greek and roman, jewish and christian, ecclesiastical and civil, sacred and profane antiquities, as Mr. SELDEN observes. EUTYCHIUS and JOSEPH were learned antiquaries, they were both orthodox. They wanted no materials, and their bias was strongly in favor of the nicean council. EUTYCHIUS declares his approbation of the doctrine, and JOSEPH compares the three hundred and eighteen to the angels for their excellency, and to the stars for their splendor. The prejudices of these men were in favor of the doctrine and council, to both of which the mahometan historian must have been very indifferent: and, in this particular respect, his testimony may be deemed more credible than that either of ATHANASIUS, or of ARIUS, would be*.

* N. B. Since I have mentioned mahometan testimonies concerning the establishment of the trinitarian doctrine, may I not be allowed to observe, that this doctrine gives the Mahometans as much reason to say that the revelation which MAHOMET published was necessary to establish the unity of the Supreme Being, in opposition to the polytheism which christianity had introduced, as Christians have to insist that the revelation which CHRIST published a few centuries before, was necessary to establish the unity of the godhead against pagan polytheism?

IF CONSTANTINE flattered himself that this expedient would impose an uniform belief, the event shewed that he was much deceived. Such disputes are in their nature not determinable, and all attempts to determine them by dogmatical decisions are palliative remedies, of as bad consequence as no decision at all, and of worse when a submission to them is exacted by fraud, or force and violence. He was not yet acquainted with the pertinacious spirit of the clergy, who never give up a point which ambition or interest, enthusiasm or humor has made any of them advance; tho the peace of mankind and the lives of millions be at stake, in a quarrel that concerns neither natural religion nor even the essentials of revealed religion. Experience soon informed him better; for tho arianism was condemned, and the reverend fathers racked their brains to find out words that might establish not a similitude of the Son to the Father, but a sameness and consubstantiality with him, nay tho the chiefs of the sect seemed to submit to the authority of the council, like the bishops of Nicomedia and Caesarea, yet the Arians were Arians still. They seemed to submit to it; but in truth they submitted to that of the emperor, who would have a decision at any rate. The council made no converts. He made some hypocrites, who answered his purpose enough, by playing with words so dexterously as to adopt athanasian terms and retain arian opinions.

How should the authority of this council have any weight with those who thought like ARIUS, when it had none with those who thought like ATHANASIUS? And it had none even with the very best of these. Notwithstanding the zeal of St. GREGORY of Nazianzum for the nicean doctrine, it is evident that it had none with him. He maintained his opinions as independently of this council, to which they were conformable, as ARIUS could maintain his, that stood in direct opposition to it. How else can we account for what he says in a letter to PROCOPIUS? “I am determined, says the saint speaking of councils, “to avoid all such “assemblies for the future.” He declares that he “had not seen any council whose conclusion “had been happy, or who had done more to “cure than to increase and aggravate evils.” He speaks in other places to the same effect. But what he says in his book about bishops, to whose characters he was much less favorable, tho he was a bishop, than St. JEROM was to their order; and what he says in some of his orations or sermons, particularly in his farewell sermon when he quitted his bishopric and retired to his solitude, go to the bottom of this matter, and shew how impossible it was that a council could be assembled in this famous fourth century, when so many important articles of faith were settled, that deserved any more regard than that of Trent. Men were raised to the episcopal dignity too easily, he says, without regard to their morals, and without any other merit than a great desire to be bishops. The ig-

norance of these, however, was the least evil ; for there were others who became the ludibria may-games of life, indifferent about the faith, and ready to take any side ; followers of the modes and customs of the times, not of the laws of God ; lions to their inferiors, but fawning dogs to the great. He continues. When they have nothing else to boast, they boast of their very iniquity. This is that mystery of iniquity, which has overspread almost the whole world. He describes some of these pastors of the church indulging themselves in all the effeminate luxury of the age, and patrons of their own vices in the vices of others, giving others leave to sin that they might sin with greater licence themselves. He paints, in a sort of contrast with these, some who put off their brags for gold, who wore long beards, solemn countenances, and modest habits ; whose heads were reclined, their walk and gesture as composed, as their mien and their voice soft and gentle, *vocem pertenuem*. They affected wisdom in all their outward air, but they had none in their minds, where it should principally reside. He compares the noise and confusion of their assemblies to those of the circus and the theater. He complains that they were iniquitous and absurd judges of things ; *iniqui et absurdi rerum judices*. That names directed their hatred and their friendship ; and that they did not blush to contradict themselves before the same auditory. In short, he congratulates himself that he should sit no longer among those cranes and geese. He leaves them to their thrones and tyranny.

ranny. He bids them be insolent by themselves. He bids them adieu. Valete, pergite. Ego me ad Deum convertam, says the saint.

I MIGHT collect many more anecdotes like these from the writings of St. GREGORY, and might strengthen them too by other very orthodox authorities both before and after his time: by that of St. CYPRIAN, for instance, who wrote about a century before, as high an opinion as he entertained and propagated of bishops and of the whole ecclesiastical order; and by that of SULPITIUS SEVERUS, who wrote about a century after his time. I will quote the last particularly, because it occurs to my memory as I am writing, and is very short. SULPITIUS SEVERUS, a zealous Christian of the fifth century, says, that in his time the best of the clergy *, those who did not addict themselves to trade

* THO I have not quoted St. CYPRIAN as particularly, as I have quoted St. GREGORY of Nazianzum, in the text, it may be proper to do so in this note, that you may see the character of the Christians, and even of the martyrs or confessors of the third century, as fully, as you have seen that of the bishops and councils of the fourth century. St. CYPRIAN then speaks to this purpose in his book De lapsis: that the Christians of his age were given up to insatiable avarice; that the clergy were unsound in the faith, and licentious in their manners; that the men were effeminate, and disgraced their beards; that the women were coquet and lewd: for he accuses them here of prostituting their members^a, that is, the members of CHRIST, to the Gentiles; and, somewhere else, of lying with the Christian priests^b. He says, that not only

^a Prostituere gentilibus membra CHRISTI—

^b Cum viris, iisque clericis, concumbentium.

trade and usury, nor live in fine houses, nor attend to the improvement of their great estates, did

rash swearing, but perjury, insolent contempt of their superiors, poisonous malice, and obstinate hatred prevailed among the generality of Christians. He says, in particular, that many bishops, despising their holy function, were taken up with secular affairs; that they deserted their flocks, wandered into the provinces of others, traded, exercised usury, got fraudulently into the possession of estates to which they had no right, grew rich, and left the poor to starve. Such was the purity of an age famous for martyrs and confessors, and at the same time for greatest dissolution of manners. Nay, even confessors themselves fell into the same dissolution, and were guilty of the most abominable crimes, "*fraudes, stupra, et adulteria*," as the saint assures us in his famous and favorite book, *De unitate ecclesiae*. He adds, that injustice, insolence, and perfidy might be learned of these confessors, and he cautions Christians against following their examples, "*nemo—de confessoris moribus discat*." Such was the clerical order; such were those martyrs or confessors, who obtained by their sufferings the greatest fame and authority in the church, at a time when many articles of faith were determined, and many more were on the point of being determined in the next century. As little credit as CYPRIAN may deserve in other cases, he deserves much in this; for he advances nothing improbable, nothing which must not have been of public notoriety when he wrote. It may seem strange indeed that so great a stickler as he was, for episcopal dignity and authority, and for the pre-eminence of the religious over the civil society, should transmit such a character of them to posterity. But this may be accounted for, perhaps, by assuming, for I grow very apt to assume, by conversing so much with ecclesiastical writers, who assume much oftener than they prove, that the saint applied to every bishop especially, and even to every priest, what modern divines applied to the pope, when they maintained, in the case of JULIUS the second, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, that no vices whatever could degrade this dignity, nor lessen this authority, unless there was a suspicion of heresy^c.

^c Vid. GUICCIARDIN, at the end of his ninth book.

something

something worse; that they waited for presents which were made to them, and disgraced the dignity of their ministry by a venal sanctity, and by the price they set on the exercise of it. These complaints were not arrows shot in the dark. All of them were published at the time. Some of the keenest were so in a sermon preached, before the whole court and people of Constantinople, in the church of Sancta Sophia. They are more than sufficient, therefore, to take away all that respect for councils, even for the nicean, which has been founded so high by divines in all ages from the fourth downwards. They may serve likewise to take off our wonder at all the revolutions to which the orthodox doctrine of the trinity was exposed in an age when councils contradicted councils; when four or five hundred fathers of the church, for I think there were so many at Rimini, to say nothing of the council of Seleucia and others, could prevaricate about a doctrine so lately established; and when arianism could revive in this short space of time so much as to make one orthodox doctor * complain that, except a few, who were of his party you may be sure, all the rest of the ten provinces of Asia had not the true knowledge of God; and another †, that the world was surprised to find itself arian, “*miratus est orbis se esse arianum*,” in short, when not only a great number of the gens linigera, the surplice-wearing crowd, but LIBERIUS the bishop of Rome, and that great column of orthodoxy, OSIUS, became fautors of the Arians.

* St. HILARY.

† St. JEROM.

THE truth is, that whether laymen came into these synods or not, as St. GREGORY of Nazianzum complains bitterly that they did, the spirit of the court was the spirit that directed the determinations of councils. A succession of princes like VALENS would have made the whole roman empire arian. A succession of princes like JULIAN might have made it pagan again. But a succession of princes like THEODOSIUS, like him at least in his religious character, banished arianism to the Goths, among whom it was at last extinguished by RECAREDUS in Spain, tho not by means as gentle as MARIANA would insinuate. If christianity was not propagated, as the religion of MAHOMET was, yet is it true to say that the system of christian theology, which has passed for the christian religion ever since, and has done so much hurt under that notion, was established by the sword, and by every kind of persecution.

THE orthodox opinion concerning the divinity of JESUS had two advantages over the other, which could not, as I think they did not, fail to produce great effects on all those who were zealously affected to christianity, or who desired, for any reason religious or political, to maintain the fervor of others. The first of these advantages was this. The orthodox belief gave a greater lustre to christianity. If the other came more nearly to the truth, and contradicted human reason less, yet this held out more of the marvellous : and the marvellous

vellous in matters of religion, that is presumed to be revealed, will impose and affect more than truth and reason. This was an advantage which the ablest of the fathers saw and improved : and therefore some of them always maintained it with a zeal, which would have been called heretical obstinacy, if they had not happened to be declared orthodox at last, against those who were willing to soften certain terms for the sake of peace and union : and they preferred to both these the keeping it intire. They succeeded. They took every other advantage that the course of events offered, or intrigue could procure ; they improved them all by this, and they transmitted to posterity the orthodox doctrine after many struggles.

EVERY able man saw and improved this advantage ; but the other was of a nature to make itself felt by every man who embraced christianity, for it proceeded from the pride of the human heart. That the Supreme Being should send an inferior being, who was for that reason called his Son, to redeem mankind and to give them a more perfect law, might be thought sufficient to satisfy divine justice, that required, according to them, a victim to be offered up ; and even an honor more than sufficient done to creatures whom he had placed in the lowest rank of intelligent beings and moral agents. But that he should send his Son, who was consubstantial with himself, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal, to fulfill such purposes as these, might be thought such a mark of favor

favor and predilection as raised the sons of men to a much higher rank in the scale of being. Agreeably to this notion, we find that the angel in the apocalypse would not suffer St. JOHN to adore him, but declared himself a fellow-servant to the evangelist, and to all those who had the testimony of JESUS *. This respect was not shewn even to ABRAHAM, or DANIEL, before the incarnation of CHRIST and the redemption of man, which is a mystery that the angels acknowledge and reverence †. They acknowledge it, and by that they acknowledge the dignity of the human nature. Thus far ERASMUS § carries the observation. But a right reverend archbishop || of our church carries it much farther, at the close of one of his sermons, where he observes very pathetically, that when the angels fell, God left them in their fallen state; but when man fell, he sent his son, his only begotten, his dearly beloved son, to redeem the race by his sufferings and passion. One of these divines raises us to an equality with the angels, the other to a superiority over them.

THERE are a multitude of other instance, ready to be brought, wherein fathers of the church and councils have imposed their own imaginations, and, perhaps, their mistakes, for revealed doc-

* Vide ne feceris, conservus tuus sum, et fratrum tuorum habentium testimonium JESU. Apoc. c. xix.

†—In quem desiderant angeli prospicere. St. PET. i ep. c. i.

§ Cateches. 6.

|| TILLOTSON.

trines and divine truths, cursing and persecuting all those who dissented from them. These instances do not fall within the bounds I have set to myself. One of them, however, shall be just mentioned, because it has been the subject of much controversy, and the cause of much disorder in many countries, and is so at this time in France. Our countryman PELAGIUS appeared in the beginning of the fifth century. He was called the britannic serpent. His first antagonist was the surly, foul-mouthed controversialist JEROM: his greatest was AUSTIN. He was condemned by councils, and excommunicated by popes. But he was a great genius, a great divine, and a great philosopher; and if he was too much a stoician in his theology, he might have reproached those who opposed him, St. AUSTIN particularly, for mingling too much platonism in theirs. The principal objection to his doctrine was, that he ascribed too much to freewill, and nothing to grace. But it may be, that if he magnified too highly the sufficiency of one, he extenuated, rather than rejected, the use and efficacy of the other. The Semipelagians at least, who dissented from the african bishop about predestination and grace, avoided the extreme into which PELAGIUS was understood to go, and maintained a necessary concurrence of freewill and grace; by which they avoided the absurd circular reasoning of those who make faith necessary to obtain grace, and grace necessary to produce faith. Man was to co-operate with God in their theology, and salvation was open to all who

who did so. This doctrine appears moderate, reasonable, and no way repugnant to the ideas of divine justice and goodness; whereas that of an absolute predestination, of election and reprobation, is scandalously so. A Jew accustomed to believe that God had chosen one nation to be his peculiarly, and exclusively of all others, might fall easily into an opinion, that a divine partiality for particular men had succeeded and taken the place of a divine partiality for a particular nation. But it has been, and it must be always very impolitic in divines to fix such blasphemy on the great master of their artificial theology, if St. PAUL may be understood naturally and coherently in another sense. The apostle meant, as LOCKE † explains his meaning not very naturally perhaps, nor coherently, to assert the right which God has over all the nations of the earth, to raise and to favor one, to depress and reject another, according to his good pleasure and the impenetrable secrets of his providence. The Jews were rejected nationally, because they refused nationally to receive the Messiah. But those of them who received him were not included in this rejection. He had chosen them nationally, by virtue of his sovereignty: by virtue of the same, he had rejected them nationally likewise. But of personal election or rejection among those who embraced christianity, and so became the people of God instead of the Jews, the apostle had no intention to speak; if this expositor guesses well. Thus in-

† Vid. LOCKE in his Paraph. and notes 7.

deed we must understand St. PAUL, to reconcile his doctrine a little to common sense*, to common equity, and to such notions of the divine perfections as it would be much more impious to disbelieve, than to disbelieve him. But St. AUSTIN thought fit to understand him otherwise, and to believe the apostle according to his own interpretation of some passages, in defiance of common sense, common equity, and true theism. St. AUSTIN, whom other fathers and councils have followed, St. LUTHER, St. CALVIN, and St. JANSENIUS, have supposed a mystery where there is none, except in the style of a writer the least precise and clear that ever writ: and under pretence of explaining this mystery they have blasphemed, as St. PAUL himself did, if his sense was

* I SAY a little; because it may be observed, that when Mr. LOCKE asserts, on this occasion, that God proceeds to favor or reject nations arbitrarily, and by the right of his sovereignty alone, without any regard to their moral character, he prostitutes still, in some degree, that of God himself, and sacrifices a great deal too much to his respect for St. PAUL. In order to soften the absurdity of the apostle, who meant, as it appears plainly enough by the context, notwithstanding this ingenious device, just what CALVIN supposed him to mean, he destroys the great sanction of natural law, by which the virtues of societies tend necessarily to their prosperity, and the vices to their misery. Surely this doctrine of absolute predestination, and that of unlimited passive obedience, are doctrines of the utmost absurdity, tho taught by this apostle; with this difference however, that one teaches us to submit to the arbitrary will of man, and the other, that God proceeds in his government, as human tyrants do, by arbitrary will. One is absurd: the other both absurd and impious.

theirs.

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theirs. They have made a god, such as no one, who knows what he says when he says he believes a god, can acknowledge: and they impute to him, what they who believe a devil might impute with great propriety to that wicked spirit. This strange and impious doctrine has been transmitted to us from the fifth century, and tho disputed by some, is held in general to be orthodox. They who agree in little else, agree in this. Jansenists, Lutherans, Calvinists, and I am sorry to say that the divines of our church, who are better theists than to adopt so abominable a doctrine, are obliged to swear that they do, when they subscribe the thirty nine articles. Whether St. PAUL intended to teach it is made to some persons, but I confess not to my self, doubtful; that St. AUSTIN did, and that CHRIST did not, teach it, is certain: and yet this doctrine is one of those which theology has imposed for a christian doctrine, and by which the peace of the world has been disturbed in every age of the church. The truth is, that the church has been in every age an hydra, such a monster as the poets feign with many heads. All these heads hissed and barked and tore one another with fury. As fast as some were cut off, others sprouted out, and all the art and all the violence employed to create an apparent, could never create a real uniformity. The scene of christianity has been always a scene of dissension, of hatred, of persecution, and of blood.

SECTION XXXI.

THIS the atheists object, and Christians cannot deny. It is necessary therefore, in order to justify the christian religion from this reproach, that we proceed to shew, by instances still stronger and more modern than those that have been already produced, how these disturbances, far from being the natural effects of religion, have proceeded solely from the constitution of the christian church, by which the peace of the world was laid, in the first ages of christianity, and still lies, at the mercy of an order of men, who indulge their passions, and find their account several ways in disturbing it. We have proved, by undeniable evidence, that the whole body of the clergy, some few good and learned but not infallible men excepted, was ignorant, contentious, and profligate; and that councils were riotous assemblies, governed by intrigue, and celebrated with noise, confusion, and the greatest indecency. This was the state of the church in the fourth century: and it did not grow better, if it could not grow worse, afterwards. On the contrary, as learning and knowledge decreased in the latter empire, the impositions of ecclesiastical authority grew up to such an height, and were so confirmed in the course of nine centuries at least, that when learning revived, tho they were detected, they could not be exploded. A christian church, for I use the word here in the improper but common acceptance

ception of it, having been established in the empire by CONSTANTINE, as well as the christian religion, and both of them being supposed to have the same divine original, the power and discipline of one became as independent of the civil authority, as the doctrines of the other. According to this system, the clergy did not compose, in the empire nor out of it, wherever they were admitted, an order belonging to the state that admitted them; nor incorporated with it as a member of the same body, independent on it as a subject. But they composed, more properly, an order distinct from it, the member of another body, the subject of another state. Churchmen were busy and troublesome inmates in every family where they were received. They lived at the expence of it, they acquired government in it, and they had often an interest contrary to it. This was the case whilst the empire continued entire. The authority of the empire extended itself over many provinces and different states. So did that of the church. Even the conquerors of one were conquered by the other. Thus it happened in the west, if not in the east, and the Goths christianised, if the Saracens did not. When the empire was broken to pieces, the church remained entire; and the same ecclesiastical authority and discipline subsisted, where the same imperial authority and government were no longer acknowledged.

BUT it is necessary I should shew you, in some particulars, the truth of what is advanced in general.

neral. Whilst the Christians were a sect in the empire, they had private judicatures of their own; and they avoided the pagan tribunals, not only because they might think that it was below the dignity of saints to submit to be tried by them, but chiefly because it was prudent to conceal from unbelievers that Christians went to law with Christians, and that, notwithstanding the sanctity of their profession, the greatest crimes, even that of incest, were practised among them. That these were their reasons, is plain from what St. PAUL writes to the Corinthians in the fifth and sixth chapters of his first epistle. Tho absent in body, yet present with them in spirit, he judges the incestuous man, and delivers him over to Satan. Neither he, nor they, had any right to judge those who were out of the church. But they had a right to judge those who were in it, or they pretended to have it. Incest might have been punished by a pagan judge. But the incest of a Christian was to be punished by Christians, as far as they could punish by excommunicating and delivering over to the devil, but even thus in order to the salvation of the criminal; that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord JESUS, tho the flesh be destroyed. St. PAUL asks, “Dare
 “any of you, having a matter against another,
 “go to law before the unjust, that is, the hea-
 “thens, and not before the saints, that is, your
 “fellow Christians? Do you not know that the
 “saints shall judge the world? Know you not
 “that we shall judge angels?” After which, the

apostle directs such as have any controversy together to take the meanest and most contemptible Christian for their judge, rather than to go to the tribunals of the impious. I understand the passage, as ERASMUS explains it, more agreeably to the drift of this whole argumentation, than others. St. AUSTIN, he says, gave it the same sense; but I wonder this judicious critic did not observe how absurdly the saint reasoned, when he thought he was obliged, by this passage, to take upon himself the judgment of causes, because he was a bishop*. The reasoning of St. PAUL, however excellent in his time, could not be applicable in that of St. AUSTIN. The empire was then become Christian. The saints were judged by saints in the public tribunals; and the apprehension of giving scandal to the heathen was a vain pretence, on many accounts.

THE truth is, that there was in those days, what has been seen very often since among the clergy, a sort of holy ambition, which proved as strong a motive in the hearts of good men transported by a mistaken zeal for the church, whose cause they confounded with the cause of religion, as that profane ambition, which mean nothing more than to advance, under pious pretences, the grandeur, wealth, and dominion of the religious over the civil society, was in the hearts of hypo-

* Divus AUGUSTINUS, in libro De opere monachorum, ait sese ex hoc PAULI loco cogi ad suscipienda judicia causarum, quum esset episcopus.

crites and knaves. Innumerable such examples charity will incline us to believe that there have been; and without going farther than our own country and the last age, such LAUD seems to me to have been, an ambitious, tyrannical priest, but a pious man.

THESE two sorts of ambition helped one another mutually. Neither of them could have done so well alone; but both concurring, from very different motives, they soon established a church as independent on the state, as conjunctures well improved, and the characters of princes well managed, could make it. The emperors were mostly favorable to them, for one of these two reasons, and sometimes for both. As far as bigotry prevailed, they looked on the constitution of the church to be of the same divine original as the doctrines of it. They received the former on the faith of those from whom they received the latter. They had as good authority for one as for the other; and, however the clergy might differ about points of doctrine, and some of discipline, the whole order agreed to inculcate the same respect for the hierarchy, or the holy principality, that is, for their own order. CHRIST had established his church on the model of the jewish. The near correspondence of ecclesiastical polity, under both dispensations, shewed a sameness of original; and the near correspondence of the terrestrial hierarchy with that which had been imagined in heaven, proved that it was divine. All this was shewish. It passes now. It might well

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pass then. But yet, I think, there was another
reason for favoring the church, which the emperors
felt more sensibly,

THE notion of a formal alliance between the
church and the state, as between two independent
distinct powers, is a very groundless and whimsi-
cal notion *. But a fraudulent or silent compact
between

* I HAVE heard of a sermon preached by one doctor SENIOR,
a fellow of Trinity college in Cambridge before king CHARLES
the second at Newmarket, in the days of passive obedience and
non-resistance, and afterwards printed. His text was taken
from the 14, 15, and 16th verses of the 4th chapter of Exodus,
or some of them, wherein God directs MOSES to take AARON,
the levite, because he knew that AARON could speak well to
the people, and joins them together in commission, that they
might assist one another mutually; that AARON might be in-
stead of a mouth to MOSES, and that MOSES might be instead
of God to AARON. What other applications the good doctor
made of these texts I know not. But I am informed by one^a,
who has read the sermon, that he established on them a sup-
posed alliance between the church and the state: or rather be-
tween the church and the king. By this alliance, the well-
spoken levite was to instill passive obedience to the king into
the minds of the people, and to insist on it, as on a law of
God. The king, on the other hand, was to be the nursing
father of the church, to support her authority, to preserve at
least, if not increase, her immunities, and to keep her in the
full possession of all the advantages she claimed. The church
performed her part, and had a right, by virtue of this alliance,
if the king did not perform his, to teach this doctrine no
longer, and to resume her independency on the state and on
him. This was the purport of the sermon at least: and WAR-
BURTON took his hint, possibly, from it, and turned it to serve
his purpose, that is, to lay down the same principles, and to
banter mankind, if he could, by not drawing directly and

^a Mr. LEWIS, who was himself of Trinity college.

between princes and priests became very real, as soon as an ecclesiastical order was established. The emperors admitted and revered, or appeared to reverence, the divine right of the clergy. The clergy, in return, made use of their influence over consciences to establish an opinion of a divine right in them. They were no longer deified after death, as they had been whilst the empire was pagan; but they were made sacred during their lives: and as bishops ordained one another and their subordinate priests by the imposition of hands, so they ordained emperors and kings by crowning them, and by anointing them with holy oil, which angels were sometimes employed to bring down from heaven. As they

avowedly from them the same conclusions. Doctor SENIOR's authority is, no doubt, as good in this case, as that of DE MARCA, or even of BOSSUET. The first, a time-serving^b priest, interested, and a great flatterer, if ever there was one, and who made no scruple to explain away whatever he had found himself obliged to say in favor of the state. The latter was as wise, if not as cunning, as learned, and a much better man, tho not so much in the favor of Mr. WARBURTON, who gave them characters, in his assuming style, without knowing any thing of them, and who has the impertinence to pronounce of the greatest scholar, the greatest divine, and the greatest orator of his age, that he was^c a good sensible man. He was all I have said of him: but he was an ecclesiastic, and a subject of France.

^b When DE MARCA was made bishop of Conserans, and could not get his bulls dispatched, he explained away all he said to limit the papal power. He sent this book to INNOCENT the Xth, with a letter, whereby he retracted many things he had said, asked pardon for his errors, and promised for the future to support, with all his force, the prerogatives of the church of Rome. After this he writ *De singulari primatu PETRI*, to flatter the same pope.

^c Vid. the last edition of the Alliance between church and state demonstrated.

made their own office, so they made that of emperors and kings, independent of human institution, and the divine appointment was signified, or rather conveyed, in both cases by their ministry. By this alliance of the hierarchy and the monarchy, religion, that should support good government alone, was employed to support good or bad government alike, as it had been by St. PAUL: and the worst of men, and the greatest usurpers and tyrants, were not only passively obeyed, but served and courted, by the most eminent saints of the church, when no ecclesiastical interest prevailed to alter their conduct; for then the most fulsome panegyrists became the most virulent libellers, and they, who had preached submission, preached rebellion.

SUCH infractions of this alliance, or compact, happened sometimes; but in general it held: and a joint usurpation on the liberties of mankind was the effect of it. We have observed already that CONSTANTINE meant to govern the christian flocks by their pastors. Neither he, nor his successors, perceived, that the imperial and kingly power might be controlled in time by the very expedient by which they hoped to govern more absolutely. Neither he, nor they, apprehended soon enough, that if a degree of ecclesiastical power was necessary to maintain religion, religion might become an expedient to render this power exorbitant. The clergy employed it to serve the ambition of princes: why should they not employ

employ it to serve more effectually their own? All this happened in time, and was brought about by slow, but sure, degrees. The church claimed at first ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as it was called, alone; cognizance of sins against the laws of God, rather than of crimes against the laws of civil societies, and of matters purely spiritual that related to the consciences of men and that the civil power could not properly judge. But then among these objects of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, discipline and manners, two very vague appellations and liable to be much extended, were contained. Sins were multiplied by variety of doctrines; and as they were punished by discipline, they were multiplied too by that. Things that could not be deemed spiritual were hawled in as things appertaining to spirituals. Thus ecclesiastical jurisdiction was extended: and the emperors confirmed it, not only by referring such matters to the judgment of synods and spiritual courts, but by their positive edicts.

THAT they were indifferent enough about doctrines, and more solicitous to establish uniformity than orthodoxy, may be well suspected of several. CONSTANTINE favored the nicean doctrine, in hopes to establish uniformity by it. But when he found that it received different interpretations, and that ATHANASIUS was a principal obstacle to all terms of accommodation, he shewed favor to the other. He persecuted ATHANASIUS, he hearkened more than ever to EUSEBIUS of Nicomedia, and

when he came to die, he died in that city, a little after he had been baptised by EUSEBIUS. Some of your writers, indeed, would persuade, that he was baptised at Rome by SYLVESTER, in order to give some color to that impudent forgery of his donation to that pope and the roman church. But how should they persuade, by fabulous traditions, and such anachronisms as even Jews would blush to own, against the tenor of authentic history, and the monuments of the age; for such we must repute the dates of his edicts to be in this case? I think that his successors, who appear the most attached to reigning orthodox opinions, might act on the same principle. They discovered, and they might have discovered sooner, that these theological disputes are indeterminable in their nature. They imagined, and they might well imagine after what they had seen, tho the notion be not absolutely true, that tranquillity could not be preserved in the state without uniformity in religion. To procure this uniformity, therefore, councils provincial and general were called and held on every occasion. They were called and held, the general councils at least were so, by the imperial authority, and not by that of the patriarch of Rome, nor that of the patriarch of Constantinople, in the first ages after the establishment of christianity. They were composed, no doubt, much like those that have been above described, that is, very scandalously; and they would have decreed to little purpose, if their authority had stood alone. But that of the
emperors

emperors bore them out. The emperors wanted only a pretence to force an uniform submission to some decision or other ; and their authority was just sufficient for that purpose in vulgar prejudice. Thus the allied powers, the hierarchy and the monarchy, have acted ever since. These farces were renewed in every age : in every age their consequences were more or less tragical ; and this is the authority to which the christian world has been resigned in matters of religion.

SECTION XXXII.

THE religious society rose very fast, by such means as these, to great pre-eminence over the civil in the empire, and to an influence over private consciences, that rendered their disputes, sometimes about trifling ceremonies, and sometimes about unintelligible speculations, a new source of dissension among mankind, unknown to the pagan world, and even greater than any of those that provoke the most barbarous nations to excesses of cruelty. But there were other means, which encreased this pre-eminence and influence vastly, and enabled the church to do still greater mischief to the state. One of these means we may reckon to have been the improvement that was made in the hierarchical system. Christianity was a numerous sect before CONSTANTINE, or CONSTANTINE would have been a Christian no more than LICINIUS. But the same order and the same polity, which were established afterwards, could

could not be established, either in particular churches, or in the church in general, whilst it was a sect. There was a sort of mixed government, aristocratical and democratical, in the churches, and some of these might correspond and convene together. But in the first case, there was not power sufficient to enforce subordination, nor facility, nor safety enough in the second, whilst these churches were dispersed far and wide under heathen governments. Presbyters or elders ruled the churches. They were all bishops, that is, overseers, alike, and co-equal in rank and power, till, factions arising, one presbyter was appointed by the apostles, or chosen by the faithful, to govern the rest, and was styled the bishop "*eminentiae gratia*." Pre-eminence and subordination were established, for much the same reason, even among these superior presbyters or bishops. When metropolitans or archbishops began to be known in the church is not very certain. But I suppose it is certain that the bishop of a church established in any metropolis presided in every assembly over the other presbyters of the province, even before the reign of CONSTANTINE. Thus you see that the democratical form of church government, which obtained in the days of the apostles, when every one was a teacher that would be so, and when they themselves had no other authority among the faithful than that of first preachers of the gospel and first founders of churches, grew early to be aristocratical. You see, likewise, how early this form began to tend to the monarchical. It tended to it

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in every succeeding age more and more. As CONSTANTINE changed the religion, he made great changes in the constitution of the empire, in the military order, and in the civil administration. He created new and higher offices in the state : so did the clergy in the church. He constituted vicars over the governors of provinces : so primates were raised above metropolitans. The praefecti praetorio had a rank above the vicars : so patriarchs had, when ever they got it, over primates. The ecclesiastical power rose up from a rough and broad basis to the form of a pyramid ; and if the last stone was not laid to crown the fabric, it was attempted to be laid. In plain terms, if there had been an uninterrupted succession of popes like GREGORY the seventh, during a century, the west might have seen, as well as the east, a whimsical but real empire founded on superstition. A reputed vicar of God, the pope, might have governed here as absolutely, as a reputed divinity, the dairo, did there. But the fates of the dairo and the pope have been much alike. The former is deposed, confined, and still adored : the latter has been much degraded, if not deposed. His power is confined, if not his person ; and, tho his thunder be heard no longer, he maintains the pageantry of an ecclesiastical JUPITER.

It may appear matter of wonder, that a body of men as ignorant and as profligate, as that of the clergy shewed itself to be as soon as it figured in the empire, should be able to assume, under pretence

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tence of religion, a power equally exorbitant in the exercise, and mischievous in the consequences. But our wonder will cease, if we consider another of the means that were employed to bring this about. Superstition took the place of religion, and faith of morality. To profess a belief of what no man understood, and to perform all the external duties which the church required, passed in those days, and I apprehend they do so still among many, for the sum of religion. The athanasian creed had little intention to make better men, and better citizens. The eight or nine creeds of the Arians had probably as little; and yet an assent to these creeds would have covered a multitude of sins, better than charity: and the vilest of men would have had a fairer chance for salvation, in either of these sects, for the merit of believing, than the most virtuous of men, out of it, for the merit of acting all their lives as such. A religion, which consisted in the profession of an implicit belief, and in the practice of certain external duties, was much more grateful to the generality of men, than a spiritual religion that shewed itself outwardly by a strict practice of all the duties of public and private morality. As soon, therefore, as theology and superstition had introduced such a religion in the place of original christianity, the one passed easily for the other; the inclinations of mankind helped the deception; the vices of the laity were indulged, the vices of the clergy were covered, by it. The solemn manner in which these men officiated imposed on the vulgar of all ranks,

ranks, who were seduced by the eye, and led by the ear. The very habits of bishops and priests contributed much to the same purposes, as St. GREGORY of Nazianzum observes in one of the discourses to which I referred above; the venerable ephod, the cassock of SAMUEL, the humble walking staff, and those ornaments of the head that denoted virginity*.

BUT farther. Lest all this should not be sufficient to keep up the false notions of religion, which could alone maintain a profligate clergy in the pre-eminence and authority they had usurped, another expedient was employed. It was of such a nature, that it might have been thought more proper to expose and aggravate, by the contrast it created, than to conceal and atone for the general turpitude of the clergy. But the promoters of it knew what they did. They trusted to the absurdity of mankind, and they followed, with confidence and success, the example set them by the clergy of the most antient nations. The order of the magi, for instance, was not less ambitious, nor more virtuous probably, than they were: and the same might be presumed of other ecclesiastical orders that had flourished in the east. But in all these orders there had been particular men, and sects of men, who retired from the world, and dedicated themselves to lives of seeming sanctity

* Cernimus venerandam ephodum, et SAMUELIS diploidem, scipionem humilem, capitis ornamenta virginibus peculiaris, etc.

and real austerity, by which they maintained a reverence for the grossest superstitions, and for the much larger part of the same ecclesiastical body who remained in the world, and were not exempt from the corruptions of it. PYTHAGORAS had imitated these institutions ; and the Jews, who had borrowed much from the Greeks after ALEXANDER's expedition had brought them acquainted, seemed to have copied in the same instance after him. If the Sadducees might be said to resemble the Epicureans, and the Pharisees the Stoicians, sure I am that a nearer resemblance might be found between the Essenes and the disciples of PYTHAGORAS, who were behind the curtain, and who lived in community. The Essenes confined themselves to Palestine ; but the Therapeutae were a sort of hellenist Essenes, who dispersed themselves, as the Christians had done, into Greece and other countries, but principally into Egypt ; for which reason one of the names was better known to JOSEPHUS, and the other to PHILO. Nothing can be more admirable than the sanctity and austerity of this sect, whether appearing in the world, or hid in their solitudes. EUSEBIUS, whom an improbability seldom stopped, would have made Christians of them ; as several antient and modern divines have endeavoured to do after him, but to no purpose. Christianity was little spread, scarce known, and scarce distinguished from judaism, when PHILO gave an account of this sect. But this sect had been long in fulness of fame, before it was imitated

by Christians ; for it had been so even before christianity.

THE decian and other persecutions first, religious melancholy, and even a desire of fame afterwards, might carry many Christians to lead an anchoretic life, as PAUL and ANTONY did in the deserts of Egypt, about whom ATHANASIUS and JEROM have published so many stupid lies. The cenobitic life began much about their time ; for it was in the fourth century that BASIL instituted his order. But this institution did not come into great vogue till the want of it was more felt, in the very beginning of the sixth century. It was then that BENEDICT founded his order in Italy, from which so many others sprouted up, like the suckers of a great tree. Monastic institutions multiplied in every age, in the west particularly ; for they grew more and more necessary, in every age, to the church, as the ecclesiastical order in general gave more and more scandal, and as the usurpations of the roman pontiffs, who made great advances towards a spiritual monarchy, increased. Enthusiasm, abetted and conducted by the policy of the church, was a principal motive to such establishments : and indeed no other motive could have filled these numerous societies. The fervor in every one was great at first : and they renewed, in the opinion of mankind, that simplicity, that innocence, that zeal, and that devout austerity, by which primitive Christians were supposed to have distinguished themselves. But this fervor soon
grew

grew cool, and luxury, and vices of all kinds, as prevalent in these religious societies, as in any other parts of the christian church. The expedient however, that served to maintain ecclesiastical pre-eminence and authority, did not fail for this. The secular clergy had been provided for amply, that they might have the means and encouragements necessary to make them answer the ends of their institution, and that no excuse might be left them for neglecting these ends. But when they turned into scandal what was designed for edification, and forfeited, therefore, their right to all they enjoyed by the beneficence of the faithful; when they should have been reformed, or their revenues should have been given to others, instead of this they kept their possessions tho they broke their conventions with the public; and the public was at the expence of enriching another clergy. Just so again, and as fast as this other clergy grew corrupt, nothing was taken from them; but new orders of the same kind were founded to screen them and the secular clergy both, or to atone for the iniquity of both: and that eternal bubble, the laity, paid the whole immense and growing charge.

Thus have things continued to the present age: and the religious society, among Christians, has imitated successfully the policy of religious societies that flourished, above three thousand years ago, in the pagan world. You must not be surpris'd at this assertion. It is easy to shew that the vast variety of religions, which prevail in the world,
are

are derived ultimately from a few general principles, common to all men because they arise from the common fund of human nature: and that, in consequence of this, many rites and ceremonies, many institutions and orders, must descend, sometimes with more and sometimes with less affinity, to the latest posterity. They descend, like torrents of water, which are not the same to the sight nor taste, when the length of their course, the soils through which they have passed, and the mixture of other streams, have purified some, and rendered others more foul. But they descend from the same springs: and, like those mighty rivers which preserve the freshness of their waters very far into the sea, they preserve much of their original character, as they roll along through the vast ocean of time. Turn your eyes even at this day to the east. You will discover rites, ceremonies, institutions, and orders of men, wherever the devastations of barbarous nations have not destroyed the people, as well as the religions, of countries, much like to those which prevailed in the same countries in the remotest antiquity. The bramins have a sort of allegorical polytheism; as I suppose that their predecessors the brachmans had. They hold the pre-existence and transmigration of souls; they abstain from flesh; they retain the notions of pollution and purification; they wash away sins in the waters of the Ganges; they pretend to abstract themselves from sense, and to contemplate the Supreme Being by intense meditation. The brachmans were possibly a sect of gymnosophists:

and there are at this time joghies and faquirs in the east, who carry their austerities and penance to such surprising excesses, that the carthusian monks, or those of La Trappe, compared with them, may pass for sects of luxurious sybarites. Should any of these reverend fathers hear it said that they are descended from antient, and outdone by modern, idolaters, they would be extremely scandalised: and yet nothing is more true. It is as true, as it is to say that they serve the same purposes.

WHILST the eyes of mankind were dazzled by these appearances of sanctity, which some few of the religious society, who devoted themselves, without knowing that they did so, for the rest, held forth, the rest pursued the designs of their ambition with great art, and uninterrupted perseverance. They could not have been achieved with less of either; for even contrary systems were made to co-operate in promoting them; poverty and riches, humility and ostentation, the want and the excess of authority and power. This I mean. The secular clergy not only screened themselves behind the apparent sanctity of the regular, which cast a lustre on the whole church; they not only imposed by the religious merit of others, but they accustomed the world by degrees to reverence them for the wealth and dignities they enjoyed, and for the pomp and magnificence with which they affected to appear. As the true spirit of religion decayed, and as that of superstition took its place, this was more easily brought about: and he, who imagined

imagined that he paid honor to a successor of the apostles, paid it in reality to the patriarch, the primate, or the metropolitan ; dignities which ecclesiastical ambition had assumed, on the model of those which had been created in the state.

THE eastern church rose by much the same means, but could never rise to the same power, as that of the west. Many reasons of this difference will occur to those, who are conversant in the history of the church, and in that of the latter empire. I shall insist on one, which was the principal, and in the consequences of which the western provinces were most concerned in those days, as they were alone concerned afterwards. The reason is this. The opportunities, of advancing early and successfully towards a monarchical form of government, were much more favorable in the west than in the east. The patriarchs had a sort of tetrarchical, or ethnarchical authority, for I suppose it is not easy to distinguish them ; and besides those ensigns of honor, which primates and metropolitans affected to have as well as they, the patriarchs assumed one which had belonged to the emperors solely, and enjoyed it in common with them ; that I mean of lights or fires carried in solemn pomp before them. From the institution of this dignity there were three patriarchs, the patriarchs of Rome, of Antioch, and of Alexandria. He of Rome remained alone in the west ; but in the east two others were added, a patriarch of Constantinople, and last of all a patriarch of Jerusalem.

It is said that the bishop of Rome, LEO the first, opposed strenuously the erection of this patriarchate. If he did so, altho it was evidently an advantage to him that the east should be divided into many patriarchates, whilst he alone was patriarch in the west, and might hope to be so of the west and the east too, we may venture to say that he did not judge of his true interest as nicely as popes have done generally, and as it became him to do in particular, who was thought to join in his conduct the character of the fox to the character, as well as name, of the lion.

GREGORY the first, and the great, as he is called, saw the advantage of being sole patriarch in the west, whilst there were four bishops decorated with the same title in the east: and he resolved to improve it. If this rank had been given on a religious account, it ought to have been given surely, in the first place, to the bishop of Jerusalem; since christianity began there, and was propagated originally from thence; tho other churches, those of Antioch, of Alexandria, and of Rome particularly, might seem to be co-eval with it. But these were great cities, and had great dependences, whilst Jerusalem lay in ashes, from which miserable state she never arose to her former grandeur; and whilst Byzantium was neither an imperial nor a christian city. The pre-eminence of bishops was determined, in some measure, by the pre-eminence of cities, so that when patriarchs were made, tho these were, as bishops had been, equal in

in authority, and tho their authority was confined to their patriarchates, and never, I believe, very well ascertained even in them; yet they might contend for a priority of rank among themselves, and he who held the first rank among them, would hold it of course in the whole church. That the pope of Rome, which was the sole imperial city during the first three hundred years of the christian aera, should claim this priority, and that other patriarchs should acquiesce in it, cannot be thought extraordinary, if it should be thought true. They might allow him this primacy, for ought I know. But if they did, they gave him nothing more than a feather to adorn his mitre. Not only other patriarchs were styled by the same pompous titles that were given to him, but bishops too. Popes were contradicted, reprov'd, censured, even by these: and nothing can be more evident than this, that they reputed the roman bishop to be, with regard to them, the first among equals, “*primus inter pares*,” only: that is, he was bishop of the first see, “*primae sedis*,” and had on that account a precedency, or nominal primacy. This indeed was little of itself, but it might lead to more. A seeming primacy might give one that was real: and as titles are often derived from powers, power might be derived in time from this empty title.

Thus the bishops of Rome, whilst they were only bishops, thought; and were, therefore, fond of a title, empty as it was, that could not be contested with them, nor was contested, till Constan-

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tinople was built, and the seat of the empire translated thither. Then it became disputable indeed which was the first see: and if the title of ecumenical patriarch; which began to steal into use, as most ecclesiastical usurpations have done, and as, I believe, this did, tho LEO the first is said to have refused it; could have been obtained by him of Constantinople, all the advantages might have been lost to him of Rome, which he expected to reap with this title from his growing primacy. This GREGORY the first saw, and he neglected nothing to prevent it. Well may it be said that he neglected, and that he stuck at nothing to prevent it, when we consider the conduct he held towards PHOCAS. MAURITIUS was a good prince. GREGORY, the most fawning, the most canting, and the most ambitious of priests, had extolled his charity, and his piety too, even when he beseeched the emperor to revoke an edict he had made, and which the good bishop had executed, however, in the mean time. JOHN, the patriarch of Constantinople, passed for a pious prelate, and was of such remarkable austerity, that he acquired the name of the faster. PHOCAS was the most vicious and cruel of men. But JOHN assumed the title of ecumenical patriarch: and MAURITIUS favored his pretensions. These were irremissible crimes in both; whilst the merit of favoring the ambitious humility of GREGORY, who affected to take no higher title than that of servant of the servants of God, was sufficient to make a TRAJAN of PHOCAS. This inhuman usurper, not content to put the em-
press,

press, her three daughters, and almost all the relations and friends of MAURITIUS, to death, caused the five sons of his master to be murdered in his presence, and under the eyes of their father* ; who was afterwards stretched out on the bodies of these innocents, and made a sacrifice, on that bleeding altar, to the same unrelenting cruelty. This scene of horror communicated none to GREGORY. The revolution, however brought about, gave him, his see at least, the victory over his rival : and he thanked God, most impiously, for it. The three letters which he wrote on this occasion to PHOCAS and LEONTIA, in all the prostitution of flattery ; the solemn reception that he gave their images, which he placed in the oratory of the martyr CAESARIUS ; and the prayers which the senate and clergy offered up for the prosperity of these monsters, in a public thanksgiving, by his direction ; are monuments of the infamous methods by which it was thought lawful to promote the designs of ecclesiastical ambition. GREGORY's design succeeded ; for PHOCAS gave, tho not to him, yet to his successors, the title he would not suffer the fasting prelate to assume. But GREGORY's memory must be abhorred by every honest mind : and the impudence of your church, forgive the expression, in making this man a saint, or the folly of many in ours who speak of him as such, cannot be atoned for by the modesty that has been shewn in preferring scarce any other pope to the same rank since that time.

* MAIMB. Hist. du pont. de St. GREG.

THE roman pontiffs had more opportunities, and therefore greater encouragement than any others, to promote these designs both at home and abroad. There were no patriarchs in the west to share with them the lustre of this dignity. In a few generations after CONSTANTINE, the empire of the west, which he had weakened, fell into ruins: and as there was no emperor in Italy after the deposition of AUGUSTULUS by ODOACER, so the remains of the imperial dignity in that country were not sufficient to overshadow theirs; especially after they founded their primacy no longer on the authority of an imperial rescript, but on a supposed divine institution. On the contrary, theirs increased as that of the emperors died away. Italy lay exposed to the invasions of barbarous nations: so did Gaul, and Britain, and the other provinces. Of all these misfortunes the roman pontiffs made their profit. The pre-eminence they had acquired, and much more their industry, their perseverance, and their skill, made them in some sort, and on several occasions, the protectors of Italy, and of Rome especially. About the middle of the fifth century, ATTILA took Aquileia, Pavia, and Milan, ravaged all the country we call Lombardy, and threatened even Rome. The bishop of this city went at the head of an embassy to him: and tho the fabulous circumstances, that have been invented to give a miraculous appearance to the success of the legation, deserve our contempt; yet the legation had success in appearance, since ATTILA, for

for some reason or other, left Italy : and Rome was delivered from her fears. In the same pontificate, GENSERIC, the Vandal, surprised and took Rome at the sollicitation of EUDOXIA, who desired to revenge the death of one husband and to get rid of another. The pope, LEO, had not the same success on this occasion as on the former*. The Arian was not so complaisant as the Pagan. Rome was pillaged fourteen days together. But some of the churches were saved, the town was not burned, nor the people put to the sword ; and all that happened less than had been apprehended was imputed to the intercession of LEO.

THE history of this fifth century, and of the three or four that follow, is extremely confused and dark : and yet we are able to discern a most surprising system of political conduct, founded on the same principles, and carried on through the whole time, till that spiritual tyranny, which had done so much mischief under an aristocratical form before, and has made such havoc in the world since under the monarchical form, was fully established. I touch the subject lightly, but I must say something more upon it.

S E C T I O N XXXIII.

THE bishops of Rome had, besides the advantages they procured to themselves, and those that time and accidents put into their hands, one

* MAIMB. Hist. du pont. de St. LEON.

original advantage which has been hinted at already, of the greatest importance to them at Rome, and every where else, from an habitual respect, that the subjects of the empire retained, and the conquerors of the western provinces contracted, for the antient capital of the empire. It was natural for the Romans, when Rome became christian, to desire that their bishop should represent the sovereign pontiff, who had resided among them whilst they were heathens. Laical vanity might, and ecclesiastical ambition could not fail to desire this. The consent of both made all the papal usurpations easy : and the people in general liked better a voluntary subjection, for such it was at first, to their bishops, than a forced subjection to prefects or any other imperial officers. The popes took the pomp and state of the pontifex maximus, before they assumed the title : and the contests about their elections, bloody contests in the streets and in the churches too, shewed what an object of ambition the bishopric of Rome was, even before the destruction of the western empire. These pontiffs, in truth, derived their sovereignty more properly from NUMA, than from CHRIST : and pagan prejudices had some effect, even when the world was become christian, in creating a respect for them. The title of ecumenical bishop extended, and realised, in some instances, their claims. But the title of bishops of the eternal city helped the imposition. This imposition of the popes did not prevail much among the Arians, because of their opposition to arianism : and therefore,

fore, as they persecuted this sect wherever they had power to do it, they were obsequious enough to arian princes, under whom they had not this power: an example whereof might be taken from the embassy of one of these popes, whose name I do not remember, and whom THEODORIC sent to JUSTIN to persuade that emperor to shew more indulgence to the Arians in his dominions, lest the gothic king should take reprisals on the orthodox in the west. But wherever orthodoxy prevailed, these titles procured a great regard to the see of Rome, and an influence, which the popes improved, directly and indirectly, to confirm their authority where it was acknowledged, and to propagate it, under the notion of conversions to christianity, where it was not acknowledged.

THIS calls to my mind the mission, that GREGORY, the same I have spoken of already, sent into Britain. This example will shew what that christianity was which the popes propagated; and how the grossest frauds, that iniquity ever invented, or impudence imposed, were established under that venerable name. BRUNEHULT, queen of France, must pass for one of the worst women that ever lived, if the general consent of historians can establish a character. GREGORY held an intimate correspondence with this woman: and this intimacy with her, and with PHOCAS, is such a brand on his memory, that we might be surprised to find his name in the calendar of your saints, if we did not find that of another GREGO-

RY,

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RY, GREGORY the seventh, there. BRUNEHULT
was extremely liberal to the ecclesiastical order.
She built churches, founded convents, and had a
great devotion to relics. So much liberality,
and so much superstition, might have made a
saint even of her too, notwithstanding her crimes;
and she might have stood over your altars in com-
pany with her panegyrist. This pious queen con-
tributed not only to maintain the authority of the
bishop of Rome in France, where it was respect-
ed already, but to propagate it where it was
not yet known; for it is plain, that the conver-
sion of the Saxons to papal christianity was con-
certed with her. The more immediate instru-
ment of this conversion indeed was BERTHE
daughter of CHARIBERT king of France, and
wife of ETHELBERT king of the south Saxons:
she protected, she introduced the missionaries: and
the king and his subjects were converted to the ro-
man religion.

I do not speak improperly, when I say the ro-
man religion: for altho GREGORY says, in a let-
ter to BRUNEHULT, only this, that “he heard
“the church of England had a mind to become
“christian* ;” yet is it certain that the Saxons
had the knowledge of christianity, as it was taught
in the first ages, before AUSTIN and his monks
came to preach it as it had been modelled, and,
to speak plainly, corrupted, in the church of

* Indicamus ad nos pervenisse ecclesiam anglicanam velle
feri christianam. Lib. v. ep. 59.

Rome and the other christian churches. The Britons had been converted long before to the christian religion: and the Saxons had a knowledge of it from them. On this supposition we may account, and on any other it is impossible to account, for the obstinate adherence of the Saxons, after their supposed conversion by AUSTIN, to the asiatic and most antient rule of celebrating easter, which had been changed in the church of Rome, and which AUSTIN opposed. The Britons had been driven into a remote corner of the world: and the Saxons were a greater barrier, than the sea itself, between them and the continent. They retained, therefore, their religion as they had received it; and knew nothing of the additions that had been made to it since the time of their conversion, nor particularly any thing of the roman bishop's pretensions to a supremacy. As they knew, so they might, and so I believe they did, teach the Saxons: and it was neither hard for one to teach, nor for the other to learn, christianity, in a simplicity that came nearer to that wherein CHRIST had taught it to the poor and the ignorant. But this was to be unlearned: and the sole object of AUSTIN's mission was to teach both Britons and Saxons a new-fangled christianity, and to inspire them with a foolish respect for superstitious usages, and with an abject submission to the see of Rome. That these were the points he labored, appears from all we know of the conduct he held, from his disputes with the Britons, from the instructions he asked, and from those

those which the pope gave him. The height to which he carried his legatine power, and the insolence with which he treated the british bishops, demonstrate the spirit in which he came, and the purpose he came for. The declaration, that these bishops sent him, or the abbot of Bangor by their direction, was modest, but firm. They declared themselves subject to the church of God, and to the pope of Rome. But how? As they were to every godly Christian, etc. Other obedience than this, they say to AUSTIN, that they do not know to be due to him whom he called pope: and that they were under the government of the bishop of Caerleon upon Uske, etc.

THE Britons stood out against the usurpations of the popes many centuries: but the Saxons soon crouched under them. The Saxons were a fierce and a free, but they were an ignorant, people: and therefore false notions of christian institution were easily imposed upon them. From notions thus imposed, the clergy derived pretensions to such powers, such immunities, and such pre-eminence of rank and dignity, as raised the bishops to an equality with princes and kings in some respects, and to a superiority over them in as many, as were, or could be made to seem, relative to religion; for in these “*omnibus dignitatibus praesunt*” was a maxim which they had the front to avow, and which the civil society were stupid enough to admit. What they pretended to belong to them, they assumed: and what they assumed

assumed they justified by canons, that is, by laws of their own making. The ecclesiastical roman yoke was so well fixed on the necks of the Saxons, that it grew more and more confirmed, till the Normans came in; and then it did not become lighter, for they brought the same prejudices along with them*: so that our island was a province, and a farm, to the court of Rome near five hundred years longer. How easy soever it would be to descend into all these particulars, I should find it tedious: and you know that I never engaged to write treatises, nor any thing more than essays; if my part in our occasional conversations, extended on paper, can deserve even that name. But since I mentioned the few false notions concerning christian institution, that imposed on the Saxons, and since I think the usurpations of the religious society have been founded every where else on the same, I will endeavour to expose them to you in a few words, to shew you how the first deception arose in the whole christian commonwealth, and how the monarchical tyranny of the bishop of Rome was grafted on it.

SECTION XXXIV.

I AM not a disciple of HOBBS, but I embrace truth wherever I find it, or whoever shews it to me: and he shews it to me, I think, when he maintains that the present church of CHRIST, by

* Vid, BACON's treatise from SELDEN's notes.

which

which we mean in this place the whole body of Christians, is not the kingdom of CHRIST. This opinion, however, that it is so, grew early into belief, and will be supported as long as that order of men can support it, who have assumed, under pretence of being appointed to govern and administer in it, an establishment distinct from the civil, and a most unreasonable and unequal share of wealth and power in almost every christian state. No opinion, however, can be more evidently false. The express declaration which CHRIST made when he said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” the conduct he held, the doctrines he taught, and the commission he gave to his apostles, prove it to be so. If it had been the divine intention to establish, at that time, the kingdom of CHRIST, he would have appeared, no doubt, more conformably to the expectations of the Jews, in majesty and power. But they mistook the sense of their prophecies, it seems; their expectations were vain, and the purposes of infinite wisdom opened themselves in a very different manner.

THE Messiah shewed himself to the world in the lowest form of life, and avoided all appearances of affecting any higher rank, even that of the Messiah, which was distinguished from that of king; tho the Jews, misled by their prophecies, could not conceive the two characters to be distinguishable. He came not to reign, but to redeem; not to triumph, but to suffer; not to erect a king-

kingdom, but to prepare men for that which was to be erected at his second coming. It may seem strange that he could conceal himself, notwithstanding the signs and wonders that illustrated his birth, the proclamation of him from above at the time of his baptism, and all the miracles which he wrought, chiefly indeed out of Jerufalem, during the time of his ministry. But it is not strange that he used all the means of keeping up this concealment of himself to the last, and in a great degree even from his disciples, on the hypothesis here mentioned. If he had declared himself publicly and plainly to be the Messiah, either the Jews would have taken him by force to make him king, as St. JOHN tells us that they, who had seen his miracles, were ready to do; or they would have looked on him, from the first, as an impostor, since he pretended to be the Messiah, and yet assumed no dominion, nor claimed any kingdom *. In one case, the design of his coming would have been entirely perverted. In the other, the Jews might have laid immediate hold on him, and have taken away his life. In neither, could he have had the means, nor the time, necessary to perform all the purposes of his mission, and to fulfil all the prophecies according to his own applications of them.

To prevent these effects of the mistaken zeal of the Jews, and to keep himself in the state of an innocent man towards the roman government,

* Reasonab. of christian.

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without being at the expence of more miracles for these purposes according to Mr. LOCKE, his conduct was reserved and cautious, his language mystical and parabolical. But the repeated declarations he made, during the course of his mission, that his kingdom was not of this world, were sufficient to keep him from being obnoxious to the Romans: and tho he owned himself to PILATE the king of a world to come, we see that PILATE found no fault in him, and that he declared him an innocent man when he delivered him up to the Jews to be crucified. For what concern could PILATE or his master imagine they had in a world that was to come, in a future kingdom, in a kingdom of God, in a kingdom of heaven? In this manner, one part of the saviour's intentions was answered. His innocence was averred. But there was another part. He was not only to be innocent, he was to die innocent: and of this he made the Jews the instruments by a sequel of the most artful behaviour, which Mr. LOCKE develops with a sagacity that might give envy to the deepest divine that ever undertook to discover the economy of infinite wisdom.

He contrived to appear guilty to the Jews by the same declaration, by which he appeared innocent to the Romans. He appeared a very extraordinary person to both; and well he might: but he spoke plainly to one as far as they were concerned, and darkly and ambiguously to the other. He pretended to no kingdom: CAESAR had no rival

rival in him. But for this very reason he became criminal to the Jews. The miracles he performed, the obscure expressions he let drop, induced some of the people to take him for the prophet that was to come, for the Messiah. But the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the bulk of the people, who hearkened, as he had bid them hearken, to those who sat in the seat of Moses, could not easily take him for the Messiah, consistently with their prejudices; since he assumed no kingdom, nor pretended to any. Nay more, they could not have taken him easily for the Messiah, if they had been able to distinguish between the Messiah and the king; since he disguised one of these characters, as he disowned the other. This extraordinary person, therefore, was, according to their logic, an impostor. They were a rejected people for not believing him to be the Messiah on the faith of his miracles: and he kept them in this error, at least he did nothing to draw them out of it, that they might bring him to the cross when his time should be come, and complete the redemption of mankind, without knowing what they did, but at their own expence.

He passed for a Galilean, tho he was born at Bethlehem: by which one proof of his being the Messiah was suppressed. Even his precursor, he who had baptised him, he who had been a witness, when he baptised him, of the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and had heard a voice from heaven declare “This is my beloved Son in whom

“ I am well pleased,” which voice, therefore, must have been the voice of God the Father ; even he did not know certainly that the Son of God was the Messiah. When JOHN was in prison he sent to ask JESUS, so little did he know him to be the Messiah, “ Art thou he that should come, or “ do we expect another ?” The answer JESUS made was an appeal to his miracles, which proved him to be a very extraordinary person indeed ; but which did not prove him in those days, and ad homines, to be the Messiah ; for a belief of the powers of magic was not as ridiculous then, as it is now ; and the Pharisees had prepared the people to believe these very miracles wrought by BEELZEBUB. The answers he gave on other occasions were not less equivocal, nor the language he held about himself at any time more explicit, than that wherein he declares himself the light of the world as long as he is in the world. He was so apprehensive of being taken for the Messiah, lest he should be taken for a king too, that he scarce owned himself even to his disciples, and that he commanded the devils who proclaimed him to be so, when he cast them out, to say nothing of it. If he declared himself more openly, just before his death, to be the Messiah, he claimed to the last no actual kingdom, no kingdom of this world, neither before his death nor after it, till he should come again in the glory of his Father, with his angels, to judge the world, and to render to every man according to his works.

THE resurrection, the ascension of CHRIST, and the coming of the Paraclete or Comforter, who was to shew the disciples all things, and bring to their remembrance all things which he had said, made them understand more clearly, and believe more firmly, that he was the Messiah and the king. The prophets had spoken of him under both these characters confusedly : and the Jews had been led, by these prophecies and by their partial interpretations of them, to imagine, not only that the Messiah and the king were to be one and the same person, in which they did not deceive themselves ; but that all the glorious things, which had been foretold of him, were to happen at once, and as soon as he should appear ; in which they flattered and deceived themselves very fatally. The disciples saw now, what they had not seen fully and clearly before. They saw that the two characters, and the offices belonging to each, were to be distinguished. They saw that their master had already appeared in one, and had performed and suffered all that belonged to it. They believed, therefore, that he would soon appear in the other, as he gave them reason to expect he would according to their apprehensions ; that his kingdom, for the coming of which he had taught them to pray, would then come ; and that, when he was seated in the throne of his glory, his immediate disciples should also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. He redeemed mankind at his first coming, and taught and exhorted them to prepare for his second, when they,

who have believed in him, are to enjoy a glorious immortality. Then, and not till then, his kingdom will begin, properly and truly called so. The intermediate time is a time of regeneration and preparation. Divines talk of a kingdom of grace; but the expression is figurative, and apt to convey a false idea. The kingdom of glory alone is CHRIST's kingdom. He instituted none that was to precede it. He exercised no dominion, no coercive power, nor delegated any to be exercised by others.

If any such had been delegated by him, it would have been so, doubtless, to his immediate disciples the apostles, and to the seventy*. But when we examine their commission, we find nothing of this kind in it. They were commissioned to teach or to preach to all nations, or, perhaps, to the lost sheep of Israel dispersed into all nations, that JESUS was the Messiah. They were authorised to say, after their master, that his kingdom would come, that it was at hand; that they who received them, and the gospel they taught, would be received into it; and that the state of those cities, who received them not, would be in that day, the day when the kingdom of CHRIST should come, less tolerable than that of Sodom. They were to baptise such as believed: and this baptism

* N. B. I say the seventy both here and elsewhere, in conformity to the general run of orthodox opinion, tho I know that we have no authority, but that of St. LUKE, for assuming this distinct number of disciples.

or washing was made a sign of regeneration, and admission into the church of CHRIST here, in order to admission into his kingdom hereafter. CHRIST gave his apostles another power, which seems to be consequential to that of baptizing, and therefore connected with it, the power of remitting or retaining sins. Tho I do not pretend to dogmatise about the nature and extent of this power, yet I may pretend to say what it is not, and to what it does not extend. It is not a power to forgive, or not to forgive, to cancel or not to cancel, sins, absolutely and definitively. Such a power belongs to the great searcher of hearts alone. The apostles might admit those, who professed their belief in CHRIST by baptism, into the church, and retain them in it as long as they held the same faith, and brought forth fruits meet for repentance. They not only might, but it was their duty to do so, and St. JOHN censures very severely DIOTREPHES, in his third epistle, for a contrary practice. If he who had offended on any occasion appeared to be penitent, he might be absolved, that is, his sins were remitted, and he was retained in the christian church. If he was impenitent, he could not be absolved: his sins were retained, and he was to the brethren as an heathen man and a publican. In these cases, as in that of baptism, the apostles and their successors were merely ministers, who performed a ceremony, or pronounced a judgment. They could not refuse baptism to believers: and it was not they, but the church, the congregation of the

faithful, properly, who retained an offender in their body by remitting his sins, or drove him out by retaining them; that is, by refusing to remit them: for which assertion we have the authority of CHRIST, in the eighteenth chapter of St. MATTHEW's Gospel, and that of St. PAUL's example in his proceeding with regard to the fornicator in the church of Corinth.

THIS power, which CHRIST gave to his disciples and to his church, was so far from being a coercive power, such a power as kings delegate, and those who govern under them exercise, such a power, in short, as may serve to shew that he meant to establish any kingdom in this world, that it shews the very contrary. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Again, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." These expressions, taken together, point at the other world, the world to come: and the full effect of the promises and threatnings they contain is to be expected there, not here. In this intermediate state of preparation and probation, all that they, who are appointed ministers of the gospel, as such can do, by virtue of the power delegated by the first passage, is to advise, exhort, admonish, and to separate themselves, and to persuade the faithful to separate, from the impenitent and refractory. This is all
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the power which the first of these passages gives. The second gives no farther power: but it contains a promise, which must not be understood according the natural import of the words, nor without very great mitigations of the sense, lest it should be understood to imply such an absurdity as it would be impious to impute to the word of God, how desirous soever divines may be to have it so understood. It would imply that CHRIST, when he comes at the last day in the glory of his Father, and to establish his kingdom, will not come to judge the world, or the christian part of it at least, but merely to execute judgments already given, the judgments of the church. In short, CHRIST gave no coercive power to his apostles: and they who succeeded them exercised none, till they obtained it, or stole it, from the kings whose kingdoms were of this world. Then, indeed, excommunications grew coercive, and severely so: and powers, that were tyrannical in their execution, and civil in their origin, began to pass for ecclesiastical and lawful powers, in the hands of men who had no right by their institution to any that are coercive or penal. But if that were true, which is evidently false, that CHRIST had given such powers to his apostles, as their successors claim, and exercise too, wherever they are suffered to do so; yet there would be no reason to allow this claim now, nor was there any to allow it even in the primitive ages of christianity. CHRIST breathed on his apostles, bid them receive the Holy Ghost, and we are bound to believe that he inspired

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spired the same spirit into them by this act, which descended afterwards more manifestly upon them and the disciples under the figure of firey tongues. The gifts of the Spirit were then common, and evidenced themselves by sanctity of life, and by many other unequivocal signs. But these signs, sanctity of life and miraculous operations, soon failed. Priests after that might blow on other priests, lay their hands on them, and bid them receive the Holy Ghost: but it was silly, and impious both, to persuade the civil society of Christians that such priests, as these were generally, could either give, or be worthy to receive, the Holy Ghost. This they did however: and it was necessary to carry on this illusion, that they might carry on the other. As soon as they had persuaded that the church of CHRIST was the kingdom of CHRIST, and that this order of men was appointed to govern in it, there was a necessity of persuading likewise, that the same spirit, the same gifts and graces, which CHRIST had bestowed on the apostles for the establishment of his church, were conveyed down for the government of it by their order.

If we had less experience of the powerful effects of ambition, avarice, and superstition, we might be surprised that some men have been hardy enough to assert, and others weak enough to believe, against the express declarations of CHRIST himself, that his kingdom is of this world, and that it began immediately after his first coming; tho

he fixed the commencement of it at his second coming, the time of which he left uncertain. There are many dark passages in the gospels, and when there are no others relative to any particular subject, the presumption of theology has a full scope. But when there are passages, the sense of which is determined and plain, these are to guide us to the sense of those that are ambiguous and obscure. To take a contrary method, to explain and pretend to fix the sense of what is clear by what is dark, may be called subtilty and deep penetration; but, sure I am, it deserves to be called absurd and impudent imposition. This now is the very thing that has been done in the case before us. Divines of all ages, all countries, and sects, have done it. They do it still: and BEZA and BELLARMINE, who agreed in nothing else, agreed in this.

I MENTION BEZA particularly, because he inferred, as I learn from HOBBS, that the commencement of the kingdom of God should be placed at the resurrection of CHRIST, from a passage in the Gospel of MARK. In that, the words JESUS is recorded to have spoken are these: “ Verily I say
 “ unto you, that there be some of them who stand
 “ here, which shall not taste of death till they
 “ have seen the kingdom of God come with
 “ power.” These words, like those which he spoke of St. JOHN to St. PETER, “ If I will that
 “ he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” are very dark indeed. They plainly relate to his second
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cond coming, which is characterised by coming with power. But then it will follow that the persons spoken of are still alive; which might have passed among the good people of Ephesus, who believed, in St. AUSTIN's time, that St. JOHN was still alive, and only slept in his grave: and would not pass, I presume, in these days. Shall we accept the conjecture of HOBBS? He thinks that the words related to the transfiguration, of which PETER and JAMES and JOHN, some, not all, who stood by JESUS when he spoke them, were witnesses. He thinks that these disciples, having seen CHRIST in glory and majesty, as he is to appear at his second coming, the promise was accomplished by way of vision. But this is conjecture only, and, tho ingenious, yet forced, and certainly not serious; for if these disciples did see him, they saw him in a vision, and they neither saw him come, nor the kingdom of God come, in any propriety of speech. There might be a more probable account given, perhaps, why these words were spoken, according to the natural and obvious sense of them. But I use none of the theological liberties of guess with holy writ, and I content myself to observe on this occasion the absurdity of that of BEZA. HOBBS takes notice justly that if the kingdom of God was to come, and did come at the resurrection, the expression was not exact, since all the disciples, not some only, lived till CHRIST was risen from the dead. But the absurdity of this interpretation is greater still. The ascension followed soon the resurrection. Between these two events, CHRIST

assumed no more dominion than he had done before, nor shewed any more signs of claiming or exercising kingly power. He scarce shewed himself to the few, who were said to have seen him, in such a manner as they could know by it, certainly, that it was he whom they had seen. I say the few, because St. PAUL, who had not probably ever seen JESUS, deserves no credit when he affirms, against the whole tenor of the gospels, that he and above five hundred brethren at once had seen him after his resurrection. Both these events, the resurrection and ascension, passed in a very private manner. There were no eye-witnesses, properly called so, of his resurrection. There were few, of his ascension. But in whatever manner we can suppose them to have passed, if we suppose him to have risen from the dead, and to have ascended into heaven, with the same public pomp and majesty with which he is to be attended when he shall come to judge the world, and to establish the kingdom he foretold; yet we cannot assert that this kingdom came, or began, at that time. As God, he reigns eternally: but the kingdom here spoken of was to have a beginning; and to say that it began when CHRIST, who had not then established it, returned to reign with his Father in the unity of of the godhead; or that it came, tho we continue still to pray that it may come, when CHRIST left the earth, or that he vested the apostles, or those who call themselves their successors, with a sovereignty in this imaginary kingdom, which he never assumed himself, is one of those paradoxes,
which

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which men, who find a color for any in the dark sayings of the scriptures, presume to advance.

MANY other paradoxes have been built on this, the common foundation of all ecclesiastical power : and it has happened in the course of these usurpations, as it has happened often in the course of others : Whilst the whole body of the clergy pursued, on one general maxim, an interest of ambition common to the whole body, particular members invented other paradoxes, which seemed to arise out of the first, and which became maxims just as true as the first. Thus, that I may say in few words what I mean to say, and not to descend into a long detail of particulars, ecclesiastical, as well as civil, democracies became aristocracies ; aristocracies became monarchies ; and several monarchies were united into one empire under those great conquerors, the bishops of Rome. The christian church bore some resemblance, after the establishment of it, to the state of antient Greece. Both were composed of several little governments. They were all Greeks in one, and all Christians in the other ; but the quarrels of parties in each of these, as well as the quarrels of one government with another, destroyed the public peace ; and continued to do so notwithstanding all the judgments of the areopagus, and all the decrees of councils. The feuds that arose in particular churches gave occasion or pretence to the institution of bishops : and those that arose between church and church, to the institution of metropolitans, primates, and patriarchs,

patriarchs, one of whom pretended at last to be the vicar of CHRIST in his imaginary kingdom. In short, the clergy, like other usurpers, in order to maintain the advantages they had gained over the laity, or to carry their arms abroad in search of more, have found it necessary to submit to usurpations within their own body, and to groan under the very yoke they imposed.

EVERY innovation has been supported by some new paradox: and divine right has been claimed by all, on that fundamental paradox, in which they all agree. MARCHMONT will tell you that presbytery is *jure divino*: I shall tell you that episcopacy is so: and tho you are not a very good papist, you will tell us that popery is so. Let us be candid, and confess that none of them are so. To set an example of candor, I will own that as monstrous as the papal pretensions are, against which we protestants exclaim so loudly, they may be supported, by wresting and torturing the scriptures, just as well as the principles in which we agree, that the christian church is actually the kingdom of CHRIST, and that a religious society was instituted to govern in it by his authority. These principles are laid in direct opposition to the plainest and most positive declarations which the favour made. But when they are once admitted, BELLARMINE and the other writers for the church and court of Rome are able to defend their monstrous pretensions so plausibly to well disposed minds, that, instead of contradicting the scriptures, they

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they seem to build upon them ; not only on passages in the epistles of St. PAUL, who boasted that he was the architect of the spiritual house, and that he laid the foundations of it, but on the words of CHRIST as they stand in some passages of the Gospels ; and, to make their work the more sure, as they imagine absurdly enough, on passages of the Old testament, as well as of the New. Thus they prove the popes, as successors of St. PETER, to be vicars of CHRIST, to be infallible in all their judgments concerning faith and manners, and to have the supreme spiritual, and even temporal, power in every christian country. Such are the real pretensions of your church over all civil power, over all emperors, kings, and princes. Such saints as your angelical doctor, such writers as BELLARMINE and BARONIUS, have affirmed them. Councils have held the same language : and all they, who would take the temporal sword out of the hands of St. PETER, have been branded with heresy, the heresy of the politics, “ haeresis politicorum.” True it is that some of your doctors, and even some councils, have seen the folly, and blushed at the impudence of those who have carried these pretensions in favor of the papal authority so high. Many have writ against them, even in Italy : but both sides have concurred in giving to the church, understanding by the church the ecclesiastical order alone, a full and independent power over the state in spirituals ; by which they saw that they might preserve indirectly a tyranny they could not obtain directly.

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SECTION XXXV.

FROM the time of CONSTANTINE to that of CHARLES the great, the wealth and power of the church had grown from age to age, by such means as have been already mentioned: and the authority of that of Rome particularly began to overtop all others, by a stupid bigotry that increased as ignorance increased, and by the artifices which her bishops employed. But CHARLES the great raised these bishops to that exorbitant power and grandeur which enabled them to vex and oppress some of his own successors, and to tyrannise the whole western world: till in the reign of another CHARLES, several nations shook this yoke off their necks, and made it sit lighter on the necks of those who did not shake it off. When the Lombards had settled themselves in Italy, the popes began to play a game, which they could not play with the same advantage, for many reasons, in the reigns of the gothic kings. They fomented continual quarrels between the exarchs who governed for the constantinopolitan emperors, and the Lombards, in order to make their profit of them against both: and when they had drawn themselves into distress and danger, their refuge for protection was to France. They apprehended less the emperors, whose government was weak and oppressive, despised therefore and hated, and who were at a greater distance from Italy, and careless enough about it. They excommunicated the exarchs,

and, in the dispute about image-breaking, the emperor himself. GREGORY the second and the third took advantage of this pretended heresy; and in their zeal for images, which suited the humor of the times and the prejudices of the people, the first of these popes took upon him to forbid not only in his own diocese, but every where else, that the orders of LEO the Isaurian should be obeyed: and the second excommunicated him, and absolved his subjects from their allegiance to him. Usurpation was soon added to revolt, and the people of Rome were made to swear allegiance to the popes. CHARLES MARTEL had abetted these ambitious and turbulent prelates against the emperor: and, when they were in danger from the Lombards, he saved them by the influence he had on LUITPRAND. But, CHARLES MARTEL dead, Ravenna taken, and the exarchate conquered, they lay at the mercy of this people, who knew their double dealing, and had sufficient reason to complain of the conduct they held in the revolt of THRASIMOND duke of Spoleto, and on other occasions. This might have defeated all their designs; and the power they had acquired might have been crushed under that of the Lombards, if they had not improved very dexterously a singular conjuncture to ruin the Lombards in their turn, and to finish on these ruins that stately edifice of spiritual and temporal grandeur, which they had advanced very far on those of their antient masters the emperors.

WHEN PEPIN the short resolved to take the title,

tle, as he had the power, of king of the Franks, he thought it necessary, not only to remove all scruples from the minds of his people, who might esteem themselves bound by their oaths to CHILDERIC and the merovingian race, but to justify his new title to other christian nations. He might have done the first, perhaps, by some solemn farce, which his own clergy would have been ready enough to act. But to do both more effectually he chose to have the farce acted at Rome. He sent his messengers to question the oracle: and ZACHARY gave the best reason, that ever pope, or oracle, gave for the sentence he pronounced. He pronounced that the French were no longer bound by their oaths to CHILDERIC, since this prince had not kept his engagement to them. The reason followed the sentence; for “such is the nature of conditional contracts, said ZACHARY, that if one party fails, the other is absolved from his promise*.” This answer had a full effect. PEPIN was chosen king, and CHILDERIC deposed unanimously, in the national assembly that was held at Soissons.

If his holiness was not paid before hand, as ancient oracles were most commonly, ZACHARY foresaw that the time of payment would soon come, and he took the best method to secure it. He was at peace with the Lombards when he solved this famous case of conscience in favor of PEPIN; but as soon as they had conquered Ra-

* MEZERAY.

venna and the Pentapolis, for Italy had a Pentapolis too, ASTOLPHUS their king determined that the popes, who had been subject to the emperors, should be subject to him. The good men, who had revolted from their antient master, did not care to submit to a new power, the seat of which was in Italy, and which would be always at hand to keep them in awe, to control, and to punish them. STEPHEN the third was not ashamed to apply for help to CONSTANTINE, the son of that very LEO, who had been treated so insolently by the two GREGORIES. But, the emperor having as little concern for the church and people of Rome as they deserved from him, STEPHEN did at last, what ZACHARY, more able than he, would have done at first; he had recourse to PEPIN. He was received in France with more than respect, with a ridiculous, and yet in those circumstances a wise, appearance of veneration, if it be true that PEPIN and his sons threw themselves at the feet of the priest to receive his blessing. He conjured them, in ecclesiastical cant, to defend the church of Rome, and the sepulchres of the apostles, that is, the dominion and sovereignty which the popes had usurped, against the Lombards. The Lombards were Christians, and meant no hurt to the religion they professed. But the cause of the clergy and the cause of religion were made, by the logic of those times, as well as of ours, the same, when they were quite distinct, and even when they were opposite. PEPIN was glad to seize an opportunity of satisfying, at once, his own ambition and that

of the roman bishops. STEPHEN anointed him, his wife, and his children; declared them, after this holy unction, princes by the grace of God; thundered out excommunications against all persons, subjects or strangers, who should oppose them in any time to come, and confined CHILDERIC on the same day to a monastery, as he confined the children of CARLOMAN, PEPIN's brother. PEPIN made two expeditions into Italy, reduced the Lombards, usurped on them the exarchate they had usurped on the Greeks, and gave it to St. PETER: such was the style.

CHARLES made several of these expeditions, and in them an absolute conquest of the Lombards. He confirmed what his father had done, and did still more, for the church. He gave the exarchate and the five cities to the roman see most certainly; but it is as certain that he did not make an absolute alienation of them, without any reserve of sovereignty over the pope and them. His grant of Mantua, of Parma, of the two Sicilies, and of other dominions, is a mere supposition, and as ill founded as the pretended donation of CONSTANTINE to SYLVESTER and the bishops of Rome. If this has succeeded a little more to their advantage than the other, one reason of this success may be found, I think, in the passages of the time we speak of here. Whatever pope forged the donation of CONSTANTINE, I incline to think that it was forged long before the tenth century, and that it lay dormant, among other records as au-

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thentic as itself, till an opportunity of employing it to some pious use was found. Thus it might be employed as an inducement to PEPIN to make, and as a justification of him for making, a grant of the exarchate to the see of Rome, without any regard to the rightful claim of the greek emperor: and in this sense I chuse to understand those who have called this grant a restitution, as if PEPIN, when he seemed to give, did only compound with the popes, who had as good a right, as forgery could communicate, to the whole western empire.

IN this pretended act, CONSTANTINE is made to declare his intention to be, not only that the see of Rome should have the supremacy over those of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Constantino-ple; but that the pontifical throne should be exalted gloriously above the imperial *. He is made to give the palace of Lateran, his diadem, and all his imperial ornaments, to SYLVESTER and the popes his successors. He is made to constitute the inferior clergy, "*romanae ecclesiae servientes*," in the ranks of patricians and consuls. In short, he is made to say in express terms, that he yields and abandons to SYLVESTER, the universal pope, and the pontiffs his successors, the city of Rome and all the provinces, places, and towns of Italy, or the occidental regions †: and that for this reason he

* *Amplius quam nostrum imperium terrenumque thronum sedem sacratissimam B. PETRI gloriose exaltare.*

† *Contradentes et relinquentes universali papae romanam urbem, et omnes Italiae seu occidentalium regionum provincias, loca, et civitates.*

thinks

thinks it, “*congruum*,” proper to transfer his empire into the east ; since it is not just that an earthly emperor should reign where the prince of priests, and the head of the christian religion is established by the emperor of heaven *.

I HAVE quoted this extraordinary piece a little the more at large, because it has been avowed genuine by the court of Rome, and has been published as such by one of the LEOS ; for which reason it may stand very properly here as an instance of the most impudent forgery, which the religious society ever attempted to impose on the civil, and may render all that remains to be said of these forgeries and usurpations the more probable. I know that BARONIUS gives it up, and would fain persuade mankind that this act was forged by the Greeks to cast a reproach on the roman church. I know too that he gives up the decretal epistles : and I do not suppose that there is any man who would have the front at this time to defend either. But these candid acknowledgments come too late, to save the honor of Rome. Her advocates defended both as long, as they could impose on ignorant ages. Nay they attempted it even after the resurrection of letters. When these impositions could pass no longer, and when they had done the work they were designed to do, they were abandoned, as many other forged acts and false traditions

* Quoniam ubi principatus sacerdotum et christianae religionis caput ab imperatore coelesti constitutum est, justum non est ut illic terrenus imperator habeat potestatem.

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have been. But are men, who confess perjury when they are convicted of it, to be received as good witnesses in any case? I think not: and therefore I insist that the forgery of the donation, as well as that of the decretals, since these have been mentioned too, may stand as proofs of the little credit we ought to give to any of those that are brought in justification of the papal pretensions to temporal or spiritual rights.

THESE rights have in truth no better foundation than the compact I have mentioned between princes and priests. It began under CONSTANTINE, but it never appeared so grossly as under PEPIN and CHARLES the great. On which occasion it may be worth while to observe how much a worse bargain CONSTANTINE made with the church, than the others made with the pope. What CONSTANTINE gave was immediate and real. The returns he had to expect were future, and such as never answered his expectations either in his own time, or in that of his successors, either in promoting the grandeur, or in securing the peace, of the empire. The emperor was the bubble of this bargain. That which PEPIN and CHARLES the great made with the church, already established and powerful, was better, and in some degree the reverse of the other. Their advantages in this alliance were immediate, as well as those of the pope: and who should improve them most was left to the skill and management of their successors. In the mean while, if they could not
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cheat one another, they bantered the rest of the world egregiously. The pope gave the title of king to PEPIN, and that of emperor to CHARLES. These princes gave temporal dominion to the pope, and raised the opinion of his spiritual dignity and authority as high, as the examples they affected to give of reverence and submission could raise it. Thus, by fortifying his usurpations, they strengthened their own: and whilst we admire the conquests whereby CHARLES extended his empire and that of the pope together, it is impossible not to laugh when we figure to ourselves the two usurpers kneeling to one another, the emperor asking the blessing of a man he made head of the church, the pope acknowledging the imperial sovereignty in a man he made head of the empire, and each bestowing most generously what neither of them had any right to give.

As these alliances were made on principles of human policy, and dictated by private interest alone, they were kept accordingly. CHARLES the great seemed to foresee that the alliance he had made would not be very well observed, and that the church would find means to transgress, instead of keeping within, the bounds of it. He had received his crown from the pope; but he was so afraid that future popes might claim from this precedent, strained to their purpose, a right to give it, that he would not suffer any prelate to set it on the head of his son, who was elected and crowned in his presence at Aix. He order-
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ed LEWIS to take it from the altar, and to crown himself. But LEWIS profited ill of this lesson. Even in his reign, the popes, who felt their strength, began to improve every opportunity of extending their prerogatives by encroachments on those that belonged to the emperors. Thus, for instance, a LEO presumed, under the pretence of a conspiracy against himself, to condemn capitally some persons without the imperial authority. The matter was examined, but the pope was not censured, he was rather screened by the imperial court, as we may presume from the extreme resentment which the people of Rome shewed after his death, and from all the indignities they offered to his memory. Thus again, a PASCHAL seized on some of the principal men of Rome, officers of the emperor, and free from any crime but that of maintaining the imperial rights. He ordered their eyes to be put out; their hands and feet, and after these their heads, to be cut off, in the Lateran palace. An army was sent to Rome to punish this usurpation of power and excess of cruelty. His holiness purged himself of the crime by oath. But his holiness was forsworn, and, having escaped the punishment, did not seem concerned to conceal the perjury; for he declared afterwards that the persons he had caused to be executed were guilty of high treason, which he must have understood to be high treason against himself; and absolved the murderers because they were of St. PETER's family. All this and more that weak prince the Debonnaire endured

ed from the popes, who came to such a pitch of power and insolence, by the bigotry of the age, and by the advantage they took of the troubles which arose in the empire, that, in the second generation after CHARLEMAGNE, CHARLES the bald was obliged to purchase the empire of the pope by very great concessions. He quitted all right to jurisdiction in Rome, and the country about it; and instead of reserving to himself that of making the election of popes valid by the imperial confirmation, he is said to have yielded that of creating and of crowning emperors to the pope.

SECTION XXXVI.

AN universal and public dissolution of manners, into which the clergy in general had fallen, might have brought disgrace on the whole order, sufficient even in those ages to have opened the eyes of the laity, to have stopped their profuse charity to the church, and to have converted their blind submission into a just indignation. But, besides the favorable circumstance already mentioned, that apparent sanctity of the few which served to screen the vices of the many, it is true that this dissolution of manners received some checks from time to time. One of these I will point out. The synod, or the assembly of the states, for it consisted of laity and clergy both, which was held at Aix in the reign of the Debonnaire, made some reformation in convents, where the debauchery was scandalous beyond all measure.

sure. Rules were established of stricter discipline for monks and nuns, and the episcopal order was restrained from some excesses. Bishops were forbid to adorn their habits with gold and jewels, to wear swords and belts, to dress in scarlet, and to make war. I am far from believing that new constitutions made, or old ones renewed, had an entire effect, or produced a real reformation: but they might save some of the worst appearances; which was enough for a church wherein a spirit of policy, not a spirit of religion, prevailed. Thus much too might be easily brought about, when the exercises of true piety were changed into superstitious practices; when it cost so little to be a good bishop, a good priest, a good monk, or a great saint, that it was necessary rather to disguise, than to restrain, their passions; and when these men could acquire such holy characters by no greater merit than this, and even make themselves amends for disguising or restraining some of their passions by indulging others. Pride, revenge, avarice, and ambition, had only their names to change, and their effects were consecrated with the greatest applause. It is easy to conceive too, that these vices of the mind were pursued with greater application, and by more persons in the common cause of the church, when sensuality and debauchery were a little more restrained; and that this kind of reformation, instead of making the clergy better men, made them only more dangerous enemies of the state.

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LAYMEN assisted to reform the clergy without much success, churchmen continued to encroach on the laity with great success, and the breach of that alliance which PEPIN and his son CHARLES the great had lately made between the imperial and papal power, as CONSTANTINE had made one before between the monarchy and the hierarchy, grew wider and wider, and disturbed the whole christian world. It could not happen otherwise, when once the bishops of Rome had resolved to be monarchs as well as the emperors, their rivals at least, perhaps their masters; and when they had acquired strength sufficient, which they were not long in acquiring, to make these attempts. Examples may be produced of churchmen, and assemblies of churchmen, who have opposed, on some few occasions, the most violent excesses of papal tyranny. The particular motives they had are not always developed in history. But particular and temporary motives, arising from particular conjunctures, they must have had, whenever they held such a conduct. Tho they had some dependance still on princes, even when the popes were grown bold enough to claim and exercise over these a most exorbitant power, yet their dependence on the pope was double wherever his supremacy was established; which I presume to have been the case in all the christian countries of the west soon after the end of the eighth century. Princes had it in their power to shew favor, in many respects, and to deal out
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some degrees and kinds of punishment to the members of the religious society, as we have accustomed ourselves in this essay to call the clergy. The popes had their share of this influence too; and their share was, on the whole, the greatest. But there was another influence, arising from another interest, which centered in them alone.

Of this influence princes could have no share; for it arose from an interest contrary to theirs. Princes and priests had agreed in encroaching on the rights of the civil society, according to the true spirit of their alliance, whilst the government of the church was aristocratical. But when it became monarchical the scene was changed. The groundless distinction between spiritual and temporal power had been long established, and had taken full possession of the minds of men. The former had been exercised from the time of CONSTANTINE, with no small confusion, by different churches in different countries; and in all with much dependance on the civil power, and a real subordination to it. But CHARLES the great did, in effect and in consequence, unite the dispersed powers of the western church under one direction, and raise the pope from an ecumenical bishop, with limited and disputed prerogatives, to be a spiritual emperor, with a large share of temporal dominion. This new ecclesiastical constitution, for such it may be truly called, which he made, or to which he gave occasion, might be
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of immediate advantage in many respects of ambition to himself. But this, like many other temporary expedients, proved fatal in it's consequences. As the division of the Lombards into several dukedoms weakened their power, and prepared the way to the destruction of it; so the union of all the churches of the west under one head strengthened ecclesiastical power, and prepared the way to all the conquests it made. As soon as the religious society had an emperor of their own order at their head, the successors of CHARLES had no longer a prevailing influence over them. They thought it no longer necessary to keep fair with those princes, to help them, and to be helped by them, in plundering and subduing the civil society, as they had done before. They affected independency on all authority that was not ecclesiastical; and hoped to obtain, by conquering the emperors themselves under the papal banners, much greater advantages than those they had obtained already by their alliance with the imperial authority.

THE contests which the popes, supported by this spirit in the clergy, raised, under the immediate successors of CHARLES the great, continued during the course of many ages, and brought infinite mischief, as well as disgrace, on christianity, that was not answerable for either. The points in dispute were few, but they were very important: and to suffer a decision of them in favor of the popes, was nothing less than to acknowledge-

knowledge their sovereignty in every christian state, as well as their supremacy in every christian church. The emperors conferred benefices, and invested the prelates by the staff and the ring. The election of the popes themselves, how much soever they had been raised above all other bishops, was so far from being independent on the emperors, that it was not reputed valid till it had been confirmed by them; nor did they confirm it till the person elected had taken an oath of submission and obedience to them. One of these prerogatives was necessary to maintain that share of influence which they had left themselves over the clergy in their own dominions, and the other to check the farther growth of that monarchical power which they had helped, as well as suffered, the popes to assume in the church, and which the ecclesiastics were but too ready in every place to abet; for the bishops did not seem to perceive, either time enough, or strongly enough, what chains they were preparing for themselves. Both the prerogatives were the more necessary to be maintained, since CHARLES the great had thrown so immense a share of temporal power into the hands of the prelates, as well as of the popes, by the earldoms, baronies, and other estates of much authority, as well as dignity, in the empire, which he gave them. Besides which, it is to be considered that if any of the power, which the emperors exercised in the investitures, was usurped, it was usurped on the christian congregations, not on the popes: and if the popes
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had usurped this power out of the empire, in Britain, and elsewhere, the emperors might very well think it too much to suffer, that they should profit of their own usurpations, and of those which had been made by others. As to the superiority of the imperial over the pontifical authority in general, it had not only been acknowledged in the days of heathen emperors and heretic princes, such as the gothic kings were, but it had been exercised by the greek emperors in matters of doctrine as well as discipline, and had been recognised most solemnly in the days of CHARLEMAGNE, in every respect of dominion and discipline at least. Many authentic monuments proved the acknowledgment: and the recognition of the imperial sovereignty was so recent when the popes began to shake it off, that, as no impudence less than that of the court of Rome could deny it, no ingratitude less than that of the popes could forget so soon, to whose favor they owed much of their spiritual, and all their temporal, grandeur.

SECTION XXXVII.

THUS the cause of the emperors stood, whilst that of the popes was founded on nothing better than assumption, forgery, and the most barefaced usurpation. They assumed, and their advocates assume still, that CHRIST established a kingdom when he was on earth. They call it his church, and play with the ambiguity of the word: for when they mean to speak of the supposed ac-

tual kingdom of CHRIST on earth, the word church signifies the whole body of christian people: and when they mean to speak of the governors, or government, of this supposed kingdom, the same word is used to signify the whole ecclesiastical order, with the pope at the head of it. To say in plain terms that CHRIST established a religion, a rule of faith and manners, the conformity or nonconformity to which is to be rewarded or punished by CHRIST himself in another life, and that he commissioned certain men to preach it, and to commission others to preach it, would not lay a foundation sufficient for the immense building that has been erected, and is still kept up, tho it has tottered long. They were glad at first to found their primacy on an imperial rescript. But they soon assumed that CHRIST instituted a sovereign pontiff to govern this church or kingdom; that this pontiff was PETER the prince of his apostles; and that he did this agreeably to all laws divine and human; nay that he would not have shewn common discretion, if he had neglected to leave such a vicar behind him as might execute all his own powers. They assume that the popes are the successors of PETER, that they have all his powers as he had CHRIST's, and are, as he was, the vicars of CHRIST*. They assume

* Quod divino et humano jure ita semper factum reperiretur, CHRISTUM suorum apostolorum principem constituisse PETRUM. This is cited by CASAUBON in his fifteenth Exercit. on BARONIUS. Omnis potestas mihi data est in coelo et in terra. MAT. xxviii. 18. This is the text. The papal com-

assume a multitude of other things, relative to these, which it is unnecessary I should stay to enumerate. Now of these assumptions, which are the principal, every man is a competent judge who can read the gospels; for we must own that no powers, like those which are assumed, can belong to the church now, nor could belong to the apostles themselves, unless they are evidently contained therein: or else we must beg the question most absurdly, as our protestant writers, and the least papal of yours, such as DU PIN and GIANNONE, that I may quote a lawyer as well as a divine, have done. They supposed that CHRIST established a society distinct from the civil, in every society where his religion should be received, by the commission given to his apostles and disciples. Let us suppose this to be true, for the sake of argument. Let us suppose, in consequence of it, that this society had a power to make laws for it's own advantage and better government, provided these laws did not disturb the established order of the state, as every other particular and lawful society has by common right according to them, but not according to truth in so great a latitude. When all this is yielded to them, all that will follow is, that such a society had a power of making by-laws to which all the members of it, that is, all ecclesiastics, were subject, and they alone. I say ecclesiastics alone, that the

commentary follows. Non videretur Dominus discretus fuisse, ut cum reverentia ejus loquar, nisi unicum post se talem vicarium reliquisset, qui haec omnia posset. Vid. autorem glossar. in extrav. Unam sanctam.

church sophists may not impose on us by an equivocal use of terms, nor employ the word church in one sense, in one part of their argumentation, and in another sense, in another. If they say, and they do say, that the legislative power spoken of was given to the religious society, exclusively of the civil, their argument drawn from the rights of particular societies is good as far as their society is concerned. But if they say, and they do say, that the civil society of Christians was and is subject to these laws, they beg the question, and they grow absurd. The comparison is no longer just, nor the argument good; for tho' it be granted that the by-laws of a particular society may govern that society, it is denied that they can be laws to the whole community. Laws to the whole community, no power, that is not the sovereign power in that community, can prescribe. I know that the trite distinction between spiritual and temporal is always at hand. But I ask, is this power coercive or not? If it be not so, a power, which begins and ends in spirituality, cannot be very dangerous nor oppressive. But if it be coercive, they may call it spiritual as long as they please; it is what I just now said, the power of a particular society to make laws, not for themselves alone, but for the whole community: and, as much as the church advocates endeavour to disguise the absurdity, and to evade the consequences, this is what they mean.

If this was not their meaning, to what purpose should

should they insist so much, or at all indeed, on the great superiority of the clergy, as a more holy order over the laity, and of spiritual power and dignity, over the temporal? This they have all done from CYPRIAN, first a magician, and afterwards a father of the christian church, down to that learned bigot DODWELL, who wrote dissertations on him. This they do even in this country, and at this hour, as openly as they dare: for let us not be deceived by the low cunning and dissimulation of some. Whoever asserts that the ecclesiastical order is of divine institution, and by that institution independent of the state, whatever alliance this order may think fit to suppose has been made with it, says in effect all that they say who speak more openly, more honestly, and more consistently. GIANNONE, who writ at Naples, carries these notions so far, that he lies open to ridicule in this particular, how respectable an author soever he be in general. He quotes CICERO to shew that, in the roman commonwealth, they who presided over the affairs of the state presided over those of religion, by a custom derived from their forefathers; and that nothing is more worthy of princes and men, distinguished by their knowledge in human affairs, than to be so likewise by their knowledge of those that are divine. He says that the two characters of king and priest were united often in heathen governments: but that, the christian religion proposing a much more noble object than the mere prosperity of states and the public tranquillity, the di-

gnity of the priesthood among Christians is separated from the imperial dignity, and raised as much above it as things divine are above things human, as the soul is more noble than the body, and as eternal happiness is preferable to that of this life. He tells us afterwards that, notwithstanding this wide difference, the two characters may be united in the same person, by an accession of the temporal to the spiritual dignity, not by any accession of the spiritual to the temporal. The reason he gives is, because ecclesiastical dignity, being the greatest, cannot become an accession to, or a dependence on, the least; whereas the least may be in that relation to the greatest: and thus you see that a priest may stoop to the exercise of regal power, but a king cannot be raised up to the exercise of ecclesiastical, no, not to that of a country curate.

IF a man of as much knowledge and as little bigotry, as this historian, could publish to the world, for I do not think he believed, such extravagances, in the eighteenth century, we cannot be surprised that these, and greater than these, were taught, and piously believed too, in the ages of ignorance and superstition. But if the primitive clergy maintained such notions in speculation, they could not maintain them in practice. They had been sheep among wolves before CONSTANTINE. They were sheep, under the conduct of shepherds, after him: and these shepherds or principal pastors were the emperors. They be-
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came in process of time wolves among sheep: and emperors themselves were often the sheep they preyed upon. It is not only true that the emperors meddled very far in matters of religion, in matters of doctrine, I say, as well as of discipline; it is not only true that councils were summoned by their authority; but it is true likewise that the clergy had recourse to the same authority, to confirm their canons, and to give them the force of laws. The nicean canons were confirmed by CONSTANTINE; those of Constantinople by THEODOSIUS; those of the council of Chalcedonia by MARCIANUS: and we need go no farther than the theodosian code, tho we might do so, to prove that the by-laws of the religious society acquired the force of laws, even in points of discipline that concerned this society alone, by the imperial, not the ecclesiastical, authority, and by being inserted among the imperial constitutions. So that not only the ratification of the emperors was necessary to the doctrines they taught; but the by-laws they made for the government of their own society were subject to the civil power.

It would not be hard to shew, by a multitude of examples, that the church had no more claim allowed in those days to judicial and executive power, nor to the immunities and privileges she enjoyed, than she had to legislative power; that is, no more than the emperors allowed her: unless we should call the power of excommunication, which I suppose bishops exercised both be-

fore and after CONSTANTINE with the advice and consent of their presbyters alone, wherever they durst, a part of executive coercive power. But if this may be called executive, it cannot be called coercive. It was a censure, it was an exclusion from christian congregations: but this censure, and this exclusion, operated on the imagination alone; and the punishment being imaginary, the power was so too. It was nothing more till the increase of ecclesiastical, and the concurrence of civil, authority made it more. In short, the power and dignity of the religious society were much higher in speculation and pretension, than they were in practice and reality, even for some time after the reign of CHARLEMAGNE, as high as this emperor raised them. The prelates in general, and the bishops of Rome in particular, before his time, and in it, made a shew of the greatest meekness, and of the greatest humility and submission to the emperors; tho they were even then in pursuit of the greatest objects of ambition. The successors of that wicked saint, GREGORY, continued to take, like him, the title of servants of the servants of God, at the very time when they sacrificed all the sentiments of humanity to the pride of being called ecumenical bishops; at the very time when they meditated, nay, when they attempted, to be masters of the masters of the world. By this hypocritical behaviour, and by that silly distinction between spiritual and temporal power, government of the church, and government of the state, they hindered

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ed men from taking an alarm that should have been taken sooner, and their tyranny was established almost before it was perceived.

WHEN the roman bishops pulled off their mask, and began to contend openly for power with the emperors, the ecclesiastical maxims which had been assumed for evangelical truths, and the whole tendency of which had not been discerned, became of infinite service to them. These paradoxes could not be proved: but they had been admitted; and the papal pretensions might be proved, plausibly enough, to be the necessary consequences of them. Thus it happens often: a few false principles, uncautiously received, establish whole systems of error; and absurdity becomes capable of demonstration. But false speculative notions were not employed alone in the cause of the papacy. False facts and false records were necessary; and therefore forgery was added to assumption*. Forgery is an hard word, but it must be used when truth exacts that it should. I say then that as it had been employed for holy purposes in the early ages

* N. B. LESLIE, who was in religion as much a bigot, as in politics, makes a member of the church of England assert, in a supposed dialogue between him and a Roman Catholic, that there were false gospels and false epistles ascribed to several of the apostles, set up by heretics in the first age; that they were detected in that same age, whilst the originals of what the apostles wrote were still in being; but that the heretics could not produce the originals of theirs, nor did their copies agree one with another. For all this he quotes EUSEBIUS, and adds, this was not deciding the matter by authority, but by plain evidence of a fact, as of any other forgery, or supposititious writing.

of christianity, it was employed, in those we speak of here, for purposes very unholy. No man dares deny the first : and the advocates of Rome themselves, BARONIUS and others, are obliged to confess the last. Fathers were opposed to fathers, and councils to councils, about canonical writings ; traditions of the western to traditions of the eastern churches ; and those that were most distant in time and place, to those that were nearest in both to the source of these very traditions. Add to all this, the approved custom of speaking and writing agonistically, or with economy, that is, the custom of saying one thing and meaning another ; which St. JEROM, that great critic and voucher of canonical scriptures, avowed, practised, and recommended : add this consideration, I say, to the rest, and you will not be surprised to hear it advanced, that we know neither why the gospels, the epistles, and the apocalypse we have, were retained, or rather inserted in the canon ; nor why those we have not were rejected. We are forced to be in this case absolutely implicit : and yet in this case, if in any, we ought to have proof that councils proceeded with integrity ; since there is so great reason to suspect that the spirit of party had as much to do in determining what books should be deemed canonical, as what doctrines should be deemed orthodox.

BUT in the other case, we are not obliged to be so implicit. If all the canons of antient councils, and every other ecclesiastical monument, had remained

mained in the hands of the popes alone, we may assure ourselves that they would have been all corrupted and interpolated, as such writings are more than any others exposed to be; and that those, which could not be made to speak the language of the roman court, would have been suppressed. Happily this suppression was not practicable in a full extent, many of these antient records having been preserved in other churches: and it is by the help of them that so many forgeries have been detected since the resurrection of letters. Some had been detected near a thousand years sooner occasionally, when the popes began first and faintly to stretch their primacy into a supremacy; a flagrant instance of which is the pretension, that was set on foot by one of them early in the fifth century, to a jurisdiction over the churches of Africa. This pretension was founded on a forged canon of the nicean council. I say forged, because when the african bishops, and among them St. AUSTIN, had procured an authentic copy of these canons from the east, no such canon appeared among them. Other instances of occasional forgery there are; but we may say, without exaggeration, that, from the seventh century at the latest downwards, Rome was a storehouse of false traditions, false records, and every kind of forgery that could be of use to establish the ecclesiastical supremacy of her bishops first; and, when that was done, their superiority of dignity and jurisdiction over all the other powers of the earth. This fund increased continually too, from the sixth or seventh centuries. The more,

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and the more important, the usurpations of this church were, the more such materials as these were wanted: and accordingly we find the times of the great increase, and the great want of them, coincide. The first decretals were forged, most probably, in the seventh century: and tho there has been much dispute, whether the apostolical constitutions were made by the apostles, or by their immediate disciples, as if it were impossible they should be of a later date, yet is it an opinion more probable than either, that they are really no older than the sixth century.

WHAT has been said in this essay may serve to shew, how little respect would be due to the canons of councils, if they were genuine. But how much reason have we to neglect and despise them, when we consider by whom they were collected, and at what aeras these collections came into repute; when we add, to the little authority of the canons themselves, the little credit that the men who collected them, and who corrected and published them, deserve! DIONYSIUS, the little scythian abbot, made the first collection of them, at least the first that came into general use, in the sixth century, and at Rome. After the eighth they were mingled up with decrees of popes, and constitutions of CHARLEMAGNE, the great instrument, as well as patron, of papal usurpations. The benedictin monk, GRATIAN, made a new collection in the twelfth century, and stuffed it with texts of scripture, as well as opinions of fathers. Of the former

former we may say, properly enough, “non erat
“his locus,” and of the latter, that they do not
deserve even the name of “*responsa prudentum*.”
If he was, and I think he was, brother of the ma-
ster of the sentences, the two brothers established
the two most impertinent sciences that ever puz-
zled the heads of men, and disturbed the peace of
the world, canon law and scholastic theology. I
say nothing of the clementines, nor the extrava-
gants. They were published when the tyranny of
Rome was already confirmed ; and are as little to
my purpose to be mentioned, as the decretals pub-
lished by that madman BONIFACE the eighth.

SUCH was the origin of that system of law which
is called the canon law, and by the prevalence of
which the bishop of one city, and a few suburbi-
carian provinces, invaded and subjected to his au-
thority the civil laws of every country, the laws of
nations, and the laws of nature themselves. Many
of the decrees of popes, that the monkish collectors
foisted into this ecclesiastical code, had not been
made, very probably, many of them had not been
executed, very certainly, at the time, and on the
occasions, pretended ; and yet they all acquired, in
process of time, a supposed authenticity, and be-
came precedents alike. Just so, by an inversion
of all the rules of good criticism and of common
sense, their other forgeries got into credit. The
least of these were false representations of things
true. By them vain ceremonies, which the popes
were admitted to perform, and vain compliments,
which

which emperors and princes paid them, came in after-ages to pass for acknowledgments of a right; and presents that were made them, nay bribes that were given them, for tribute. The greatest were those gross lies, and all those fabulous relations which they invented, and propagated, to nourish superstition, or to justify usurpation, which were not only void of all foundation, but often irreconcilable to history and chronology; and which, however, were repeated till they were believed on the faith of fabulous legends. Thus they builded up a sovereignty, at all times the most absurd, and for a long time the most tyrannical, that had ever been felt over the western world. An uniform system of ambition steadily and artfully pursued, from one generation to another, through ages of ignorance and superstition, wherein it was easy to impose on the understandings of men, and to direct their consciences, established this tyranny little by little. It grew up fastest, from the time it was established, in the out-skirts of the empire, in Britain, and in Spain for instance. It grew up less in France, and it was revered least of all at Rome. The Romans were pleased to see their city become the seat of chimerical, when it was so no longer of real, empire. But then they used their pontiffs, as they had sometimes used their emperors. They abetted their conquests abroad, and treated their persons ignominiously at home. These pontiffs were never more respected in foreign nations, than they were at the time when they gave the greatest scandal, and received the greatest insults, in Italy. By

the means and by the conduct that have been mentioned, however, they were able, even in such circumstances, to assert with success the most exorbitant of their pretensions against the greatest emperors.

THIS success varied indeed on some particular occasions; but on the whole, and in the event, it was in their favor. Thus, that I may quote two examples at least, the first OTHO deposed JOHN the thirteenth, in the tenth century, for debauchery and treason; directed and confirmed the election of LEO the eighth; restored this pope when he had been expelled from his seat by a rival; chose another, and re-established the imperial right to grant investitures, and to nominate the bishops of Rome, which prerogatives had been lost by the successors of CHARLEMAGNE. Thus, on the other hand, GREGORY the seventh, in the next century, taking up the contest about these very prerogatives, which was again on foot, carried it on with so much success, that, all circumstances considered, by what he effected, and by what he put it in the power of his successors to effect, he may be esteemed a worse man, and a greater conqueror, than ALEXANDER or CAESAR. In this contest, he had the address to gain to his side the mother and the aunt of the emperor HENRY the fourth, and to debauch, in every sense of the word, perhaps, his cousin german the countess MATHILDA. At least, the manner in which she lived with this dirty monk, and which was not at all necessary to the support of a cause she

the might and did affect to favor on a religious principle, justifies the accusation sufficiently. He made the Saxons revolt : he divided the empire : he excommunicated the emperor and all his adherents over and over : and when he was asked, by what right he had presumed to deprive this prince of his crown, and to absolve the subjects of the empire from the allegiance they had sworn to him ; he answered that he had done it conformably to customs and usages of his predecessors *. Such customs and such usages, before HILDEBRAND, were entirely unknown to the most learned men in former ages, as well as in ours. But HILDEBRAND had precedents ready to alledge : and some such are, I believe, mentioned in letters of his writing. How, indeed, should he want them, when Rome was a storehouse of acts of papal power which were never executed, nor would have been suffered at the times when they pretended to have been executed, but were laid up to be produced on future occasions ? This instance may serve to prove, by the way, therefore, the truth of what is said above ; for whether the pope invented these fabulous relations himself, or whether his secretary furnished him with false documents, as I learn by a note of BAYLE it has been supposed in his excuse, these lies were coined in the papal mint. To conclude : this emperor, who came, it is said, victorious out of more than sixty combats, and who had forced his enemy from Rome into an exile, from which he never returned, at Salerno, was de-

* MAIM. Decad. de l'empire.

posed, dethroned, and confined to the prison where he died, by his son HENRY the fifth, whom PASCAL the second encouraged in his rebellion, and excited to this cruelty.

AFTER the death of HENRY the fourth, the popes completed their usurpations very soon. As they robbed the emperors of the right to confirm their elections, they robbed the clergy and the people of the right to elect them; for it was decreed at Mantua, that the cardinals alone should chuse the popes. In a council held at Troyes, it was decreed that investitures to benefices belonged to the sovereign pontiff alone; because religion was polluted, said these reverend fathers, when persons dedicated to the service of the heavenly and immortal King became subjects and vassals of an earthly and mortal prince. In a council held at Rheims, HENRY the fifth, who had taken up his father's quarrel with the popes, tho he had rebelled in the same quarrel against his father, was excommunicated: and these circumstances, with others discernible enough in history, determined him to a composition. He gave up the right of investitures; for he consented to hold it by a grant from the pope, and not as an imperial prerogative. He consented too that this grant should be restrained to him personally, and that the prerogative should belong solely to the see of Rome after his decease. The popes were now arrived at that height of power and independency which had been so long the object of their ambition. They have main-

tained themselves in it, as they attained to it, by
 fomenting rebellions, assassinations, massacres, and
 by employing superstition to keep up, in every
 state, a private conscience favorable to the eccle-
 siastical, and dangerous to the civil, authority.
 Such have been the consequences of an alliance be-
 tween the monarchy and the hierarchy ; for those,
 who talk of an alliance between the religious and
 civil society, deserve only contempt when they af-
 firm with fact and common sense both against
 them : and I believe that, from the days of CHARLES
 the great to the reformation, no instance can be
 brought of a contest between them, wherein the
 bishops of Rome have not prevailed in the whole,
 or in some very essential points, by the wise maxim
 of observing conjunctures, and of pushing their
 pretensions to the utmost with violence and in-
 solence ; or of reducing them to terms of real or
 seeming moderation. When conjunctures were
 favorable, they bullied and usurped : when these
 were unfavorable, they whined ; composed, if they
 could, and, if they could not, submitted. Had
 the civil powers of Europe seen their danger in
 time, and united against it, these things could not
 have happened, nor the christian church have be-
 come a perpetual source of the greatest evils to the
 christian world. But the civil powers were di-
 vided, and the popes growing of more and more
 consequence, as their dignity and authority in-
 creased, every side was glad to have them : and the
 side that bid most, or yielded most, was sure to
 have them. France had raised and protected

them: and France afforded a terrible example, even as lately as the sixteenth century, of her own mistaken policy in the ninth and following centuries.

NOTWITHSTANDING the great success which the popes had, and the superiority they acquired over all christian princes by acquiring it over the emperors, the struggle was hard; the event had been sometimes doubtful; and it was not very certain that they would be able to maintain the rights they had already usurped, or to keep the laity in constant awe by the thunder of excommunications. To make their work sure, therefore, they judged it necessary to invent still new expedients, and to improve every old one that had served to exalt ecclesiastical power and dignity. They did more. They found means to divert the attention of mankind from Europe to Asia, and to confirm insensibly the tyranny they had usurped, by engaging the princes and states of the west to undertake romantic expeditions for extending it into the east. The epidemical madness of the croisades, which ambition, superstition, and licentiousness combined to nourish, lasted two hundred years: and if these unholy wars did not extend the dominion of the church, nor establish the papal power in the countries where they were made, both the church and the popes found their account in them several ways, where they meant much more to find it. The croisades were conspiracies of the religious against the civil society of Europe. These two societies

were nearly on a balance of power. The croisades turned it in favor of the former. MEZERAY thinks that the uneasy and dangerous situation of his affairs in Italy determined URBAN the second to come into France, when he held the council of Clermont there; and that the promoting of the first expedition against the Saracens was nothing more than a pretence he took. But he had no need of any such pretence. He was a french man: and France, as MEZERAY himself says, was the ordinary refuge of the popes. Besides, when he had resolved to put in execution this unchristian project, he could not fail to see that there was no country then in Europe, wherein this scene of farce, which was to produce so many scenes of tragedy, could be acted with so much advantage as in France. Italy and Germany were divided between him and the emperor. Spain was the theatre of one perpetual war against the Moors. Britain was superstitious enough, but Britain lay in a remote corner of the world: the norman invasion was just over, and the new government scarce settled. France was liable to none of these objections: and the success which his holiness had there might surpass his expectations, as it surpasses almost the belief of posterity. The enthusiastical fury, for such it was, infused at Clermont by the pope, and fomented by his emissaries every where else, became at once an epidemical distemper, and all Europe grew delirious. Princes abandoned their dominions, and private men their patrimonies, to the care and protection of the church.

Besides

Besides innumerable frauds that the clergy committed, the regulars especially, to invade the possessions of the laity; the laity was obliged to sell them on these occasions, and the clergy was ready and able to buy. No wonder, therefore, since power always follows property, if the religious society was strengthened by being enriched; if the civil was weakened by being impoverished; and if, upon the whole, the church gave the law to the state.

MANY other expedients were employed, like so many underprops, to support the same system. They were less observed as such, because they carried an appearance of religious austerity and self-denial, of edification, not of acquisition. Some of the men who furnished these expedients, and who made them effectual to the purposes of ecclesiastical ambition, were the bubbles and the victims of their own superstitious zeal. But fools have been always led, in matters of religion especially, by designing knaves. Hermits had been summoned from their solitudes, on some occasions, to support a turbulent seditious bishop: one example of which has been referred to above. How much more easy was it for that universal bishop, the pope, when religious orders multiplied, as they did prodigiously in the ages we speak of here, and when, whoever instituted, he confirmed them, to employ these standing armies of monks more silently, but more effectually too, in his service? The croisades gave much occasion to these institutions: and the

extravagance was carried so far that military orders were instituted among the rest, that is, orders of men whose particular profession obliged them to defend and propagate christianity, as long as they lived, by cutting of throats. This indeed was the general profession of all those who took the badge of the cross, whenever a pope thought fit, for the time at least for which they engaged. I say, whenever a pope thought fit; because this cruel expedient, which had been employed originally against the Mahometans, was employed afterwards against Christians, against all such as were called heretics, when every man was called by that name who did not, because he could not, think as the church of Rome ordered him to think, or who exclaimed against the abominable corruptions of that court.

AMONG the expedients by which the religious society was attached to the pope independently of their lawful sovereigns, and to the church independently of the state, that of a forced celibacy was one. They were a distinct order of men, and had a separate interest from the other society before. But by this institution every band, that might have united some of them at least to it, was cut off, under the specious pretence of a greater degree of christian purity and perfection. Monks and nuns took a vow of chastity, wherein celibacy was included, according to the logic employed for this political purpose: and it was manifestly necessary to the same purpose that the secular clergy should

should be put under the same restraint. They were intended to mingle, more than the others, with civil society. Their habitudes were much the same, and their interest not so separate. There was, therefore, the more danger that they might contract a love for the civil constitution of their country, prefer their king to the pope, and reverence a parliament or assembly of the states more than a council. All, that could be done to prevent so great a mischief, was to hinder this attachment to their country from increasing by that natural attachment which fathers of families have to their children. This was seen early: and the bishops of Rome had taken upon them, as far back as the seventh century, to forbid the marriages of priests. Their orders had been rejected by some, by the Spaniards particularly, and had been ill obeyed in general. But celibacy was now enjoined more strictly, and enforced more powerfully. Decrees of popes, canons of councils, all kinds of authority, were employed: and it must be confessed, to the honor of ecclesiastical policy, that the yoke imposed was rendered as light as possible, by connivance, and even by indulgence. The concubinage of priests was tolerated, nunneries became brothels, and if among the standing expences of convents a reasonable allowance was not made to the monks for the necessary expences of fornication, “*ad purgandos renes,*” and on a principle of health, which has been said, but may be denied; this at least is notorious, that the fathers were left to provide for their health, in the

As this expedient attached the whole clergy, more intimately, to the general interest of the church, and to the particular interest of the pope; auricular confession and private penance were designed to attach the people more intimately to the clergy*. Public confessions and public penance, as they had been practised in the primitive church, might impose more, and be a greater restraint on vice and immorality. But when it was thought sufficient that all this passed privately between the confessors and the penitents, many advantages, which were deemed preferable to such a restraint, resulted from the modern practice. Penitents were exempted from public shame; if they blushed, they blushed in a corner: and confessors had the most secret transactions, nay the thoughts and designs, of mankind in their keeping. They had more: they had not only a general influence over private conscience, but the means of exercising this influence in private; the means of teaching privately what they dared not preach publicly, and of instilling into the minds of men every principle and passion they pleased. This expedient ad-

* N. B. Whatever private confessions, as well as others, might have been practised antiently, the law, by which every person is obliged once in a year, I think, to confess all his sins to his proper priest, was not made till INNOCENT the third got it enacted, among several that were calculated merely to advance the power and authority of the priesthood, in the lateran council.

vanced the papal empire more than any : it made the bishop of Rome, in some circumstances, as terrible as the old man of the mountain ; and enabled ecclesiastical ambition to do, more directly, more regularly, and more constantly, than before, all the mischief that has been imputed to religion. A very moderate knowledge of history, ecclesiastical and civil, antient and modern, will furnish examples enow to confirm this truth. It is impossible to read without horror, for instance, the accounts we have of the ambition, insolence, and perfidy, of HADRIAN and ALEXANDER, in their disputes with FREDERIC the first, whom HADRIAN, like the king of the assassins, endeavoured to have drowned, stabbed, or destroyed by magic ; and whom ALEXANDER, they say, insulted, in the words of the psalmist, “ super aspidem et “ basiliscum ambulabis.” As little can we read, without the same sentiment, the proceedings of GREGORY the ninth, a worthy successor of the seventh, in the next century, that is the thirteenth, against the second FREDERIC. But if all these histories, and others of the same kind, were wanting, and we had no other than that of THUANUS, that of THUANUS alone would serve the purpose, and the better for being nearer our own time. That wise and honest historian acknowledges that all the iniquities of the league were hatched and nursed up to maturity in the confessionals : after which, the effects of this private influence were publicly avowed ; the sovereignty of the popes over all other sovereigns, in matters of religion,

ligion, and in matters appertaining to religion, the infallibility of their judgments, their dispensing and deposing power, the duty of rebellion in some cases, and the merit of assassination in others, were propagated from the pulpits: and what their pastors preached, the people executed.

It might be expected, perhaps, that the quarrels which arose after the reign of CHARLES the great, from a conflict of spiritual and temporal prerogatives and jurisdiction, as well as those disturbances which arose from dissenting opinions about articles of faith, and points of doctrine, long before his time, would be appeased, and prevented for the future, by the establishment of this papal monarchy. But, if such an expectation was entertained, it was wholly disappointed. The successors of GREGORY the seventh took every opportunity of asserting their right to all the powers, temporal and spiritual, that he had claimed, and of exercising them as vicars of CHRIST. There is a decree of BONIFACE the eighth, who was less able, less successful, and more mad, if possible, than HILDEBRAND, that holds it's place in the canon law, and that declares subjection to the roman pontiff necessary to the salvation of every human creature*. This subjection too is not confined to spirituals: for, in the Extravagants, he claims a right to the two swords, and asserts a jurisdiction, over all temporal, as well as spirituals

* Subesse romano pontifici.

authority †. This jurisdiction was confirmed by the council of Lateran, and was founded in the theology of those doctors, who made a christianity of their own, with little regard to that of CHRIST whose name it bore, and often in plain contradiction to his gospel. Thus St. THOMAS, the evangelical doctor, as he has been called very improperly and very impertinently, pretended to prove, by shameful prevarications, that such a submission as the popes required was an essential condition of salvation: and he, like the rest of his tribe, and their masters the popes, inflamed the dissensions about articles of faith and doctrines as much, as about prerogatives and jurisdictions.

To what purpose should I quote any more instances, to shew that this has been the proceeding of the church of Rome, as I have asserted before, and as I assert now over again, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries? The fact is notorious. But yet this doctrine had never been acquiesced in universally. Sometimes kings, nay sometimes councils, had opposed it: and the reformers, in the sixteenth century, were so far from advancing any thing new on this head, that numbers of Christians in the west, as well as all the churches in the east, had constantly disowned it during every intervening age; and that the former had suffered rather, than to own it, the most cruel

† Regem se regum, mundi monarcham, unicum in spiritualibus et temporalibus dominum promulgavit.

persecu-

persecutions. Thus the same conflicts of jurisdiction were frequently renewed, and the same calamities continued, by the same pertinacious spirit of ambition; till princes being tired with these struggles, they came little by little, at different times and in different places, to certain terms of accommodation. Princes renewed with the popes their former alliances with the hierarchy, and compounded the best they could with the tyrant they had acknowledged. But notwithstanding these compositions, and tho the popes dare not exercise their pretended rights as they did formerly, they keep up their pretensions, in hopes that an happy revival of ignorance and barbarity may do them, sooner or later, as much good as the unhappy resurrection of letters did them hurt.

SECTION XXXVIII.

SUCH as I have sketched them rudely, but truly, were the ecclesiastical and papal usurpations on civil sovereignty, complete almost before avowed, and opposed as soon as avowed. But the other usurpations of Rome were different in their direction, and in their course. The intention of these being to vest in the bishop of that see the sole right of deciding in matters of faith and doctrine, either immediately without, or ultimately with, the concurrence of a council, and by way of confirmation, they were plainly directed against all the inferior ranks in the hierarchy: and thus, whilst princes and states defended their own rights

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by

by constant, tho unconcerted, efforts, they left the pope at liberty to deal with his subjects, for such the clergy, even the prelates, had made themselves, as he thought fit, and to proceed in his judgments with their advice, or without it. The consequence soon followed: the laity believed as the church taught, and the church taught as the pope pronounced. But we must not imagine that this usurpation on a prerogative the church had always exercised by her representative assemblies, convened without the papal authority, and acting independently on it, was admitted because either the religious or the civil society thought it belonged to the pope by divine right; or because the former being unable to resist it without the abatement and aid of the latter, the latter neglected it as unconcerned in it. Neither of these societies could believe that this prerogative belonged to the pope by divine right; which the greatest authorities and the recent practice of the whole ecclesiastical order contradicted: and, if we consider the passages of preceding ages, we shall find reason to believe that princes and civil magistrates did not suffer this usurpation to take place, because they neglected it, or thought themselves unconcerned in it, but because they desired that it might take place. What is here said deserves to be explained: and when it is so, tho it be simply my conjecture, I think it will justify itself.

FROM the time there had been such a thing as
 christia-

christianity in the world, Christians had been divided not only about compliments, rites, and ceremonies, “such silly things, says HOOKER, that “very easiness doth make them hard to be disputed about in serious manner* ;” but about every important article of their religion: and as soon as they had power in their hands, they persecuted one another, and disturbed the peace of the empire. To remedy this evil, councils were employed: but councils defined and decreed to little purpose. To support their decisions, the authority of the emperors was employed. Some of these, like THEODOSIUS, made the most sanguinary laws, and exercised the most cruel tyranny, in the cause of orthodoxy. Others of them seemed to have so much concern for the church, that they had none for the empire; like HONORIUS, who was extremely busy at Ravenna in punishing Manicheans, Donatists, Priscillianists, and heretics of every denomination, whilst the Goths marched without opposition to Rome. All this, however, proved ineffectual; and new heads sprouted out from the hydra of theology, as fast as the spiritual and temporal swords lopped them off. It could not be otherwise. The scriptures are a sure criterion of orthodoxy when they are applied no farther, than they were designed to be such: and they could be designed to be such no farther, than they are intelligible and plain. He who pretends to employ this rule any farther, profanes the scriptures, and abuses himself or

* Ep. dedicat.

others,

others. This criterion, considered under the image of a rule, may be said to mark out to us the great points, the inches, and the feet, for instance. But the less dimensions, the lines, for instance, are not marked, or they are not discernible. The master builder, who put this rule into our hands that we might work out our salvation by it, proportioned the rule to the work. How came we then, paultry builders that we are! to mark new and more minute divisions in this rule; to alter it, under pretence of making it more complete, and to measure and to build by guess? The gospel is the rule: theology is the rule thus altered. He who adheres to one, founds his religion on divine; he who adheres to the other, on human authority; the first infallible and fixed, the second precarious and variable.

METAPHYSICS and tradition, their own whimsies and those of their predecessors, guided the clergy, and constituted their theology. They never considered the word of God naked, if I may say so; nor ever looked at it, except through a theological medium, through which every man might see whatever he had a mind to see in it. Many of the questions that arose were, in no degree, objects of reason: and no men living were less fit, than the fathers of the church, the greatest of them, St. CHRYSOSTOM or St. JEROM, and St. AMBROSE or St. AUSTIN, to speak or write on any subject, that required a clear determination of ideas, a closeness of reasoning, an
evange-

evangelical candor, or even common ingenuoufness. Besides that it was difficult very often to know whether these men spoke sincerely, or with economy, they declaimed much: and those of them, who pretended to reason, reasoned ill. They perverted the sense, and defamed the characters, of their adversaries: they quibbled and cavilled, and then decided dogmatically on subjects they did not understand; as St. AUSTIN did, I presume, in the case of pelagianism, and in the doctrine of absolute predestination; which he, after St. PAUL, and CALVIN after him, endeavoured to establish. Their personal partialities, the spirit of party and faction, were manifest; as in the case of ORIGEN, who did great honor and service to the christian church, and yet was condemned by the same prelate that ordained SYNESIUS bishop of Ptolemais, tho the honest philosopher declined this honor, and declared he would neither abandon his wife, nor several of those platonic opinions that were repugnant to the christian doctrine. There are so many examples to justify this charge, in every part of it, that if any cholerick divine should presume to deny it, the same fate might attend him and the fathers he took under his protection, as attended them and the monk who defended them against BARBEYRAC. The charge might be proved out of their own works, and their theology shewn to be no better than their ethics.

I HAVE touched over again, among others, some things

things that have been mentioned already, in order to introduce my conjecture about the reason, that might determine the civil powers to make no opposition to the popes when they assumed first an absolute authority, even superior to that of councils, in matters of faith, and in all matters of doctrine and discipline. Their reason must have been political. It could not be religious. The manner of holding the first council at Jerufalem, and the manner of decreeing in it, as they are represented in the fifteenth of the Acts, made strongly for the councils, and not at all for the popes. This was certainly the first council, a precedent for all others, and the foundation of their authority over the whole church. No man, I believe, before BARONIUS, had discovered that CHRIST himself held a council, and that he presided in it, when he called his disciples to him, and asked them first, as one who enquired about news, whom men said that he was; and next as a president who took their opinions whom they said that he was *. But this little sophistry was meant to insinuate that as CHRIST gave the keys on this occasion to PETER and his successors, so he gave them particularly a superiority over councils, nay, that he rendered these the least useful assemblies in the world. PETER alone pronounced the decree of this type of a council †; and tho the others assented, no doubt,

* Matt. xvi. Mark viii. Luke ix.

† Actio CHRISTI typum quendam exprimit celebrandi concilium.

yet does it not appear that the form of consulting them was observed. The practice of the church afforded no more reason, than the terms of the gospel, for this superiority of the popes over councils; but the woeful experience of many ages shewed how inadequate the institution of councils themselves was to the purpose of preserving uniformity in christian churches, and peace in christian states: and this political consideration became a sufficient reason to the civil powers for favoring, or at least for not opposing, the usurpation of the popes in the instance we speak of here.

It had been found necessary, even in the apostolical age, to elect a presbyter in every church, who might preserve the unity of it by his authority, and prevent the schisms which arose perpetually. This was the institution of bishops. As christianity spread, as bishops multiplied, as they grew more powerful, and as theology grew more and more contentious, the same expedient, that had been found useful, if not wholly effectual, to preserve the uniformity of particular churches, might seem the most proper to be employed for the same purposes in the universal church: and in this case who so fit to be the universal bishop as the bishop of Rome? Rome had been the seat of empire, when the empire had been in it's glory. If the dignity of cities was to determine, as it had always done, the dignity of sees, there was none that could vie with that of Rome. If a right
 3 derived

derived from St. PETER, the supposed prince of the apostles, was to determine, there was none neither, in this case, to vie with that of Rome. Antioch, the first bishopric of PETER, had yielded to the second imperial city, Constantinople. Who could vie then with the bishop of the first imperial city, that pretended, and was believed to have been the second bishopric of PETER, as well as the scene of his martyrdom?

It is true that some bishops of Rome had erred most grievously in their judgments, and been scandalous in their manners. But others had retrieved, in some degree, the honor of the see: and if the heresies and vices of popes were made objections against them, in this case, what church was there that could boast an uninterrupted succession of orthodox and pious prelates? In short, all the churches of the west had contracted, in process of time, such an habitual reverence for that of Rome, that her opinions in matters of religion and conscience had been frequently asked, and that the judgments of her bishops had been received with an apparent submission, even by those who did not acknowledge, till long afterwards, a power to impose them. The churches of Spain and of Gaul afford a most remarkable instance to our present purpose, in the famous case of the procession of the Holy Ghost. Both of them paid a great regard to the papal authority in matters of this kind: the latter, I think, most and soonest; tho the former has outstripped her

since in a bigot attachment to it: and yet both these churches had added the words “filioque,” in order to declare their belief that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Son as well as the Father, to the constantinopolitan creed, not only without, but against, the consent of the popes. This addition too was not only maintained three hundred years together, but imposed, at last, on the church of Rome; one of her infallible bishops having admitted it into his creed very wisely, and chosen to authorise what he could not alter, rather than suffer so great a part of the western church to stand in opposition to his infallibility, at the very time when the establishment of it was attempted.

AFTER this time the clergy grew more obsequious to the popes, and more insolent to their princes; for as the power of the former increased, their independency on the latter increased with it. If it had not been so, we should have heard of more oppositions to the doctrines of Rome; and those we do hear of would have prevailed sooner. But as the civil power desired nothing more, than an uniformity of belief for the sake of peace, and thought that this uniformity could be preserved no way so well, as by giving to one bishop a superintendency over the faith of the whole church, two things followed of course. One we know. The other we may conjecture from what we know. We know that civil and ecclesiastical power united their efforts to exterminate, by in-

2

quisitions,

quisitions, by croisades, and all the cruelties they were able to exercise, every sect that arose in direct and open opposition to the doctrines and decisions of the church of Rome. We conjecture that in cases where the opposition was more confined, and more disguised, where it seemed directed to diminish, rather than to abolish, the authority of the popes, the same thing happened formerly in many places, which we see happen in France at this day. A great number of the inferior clergy, few of the prelates, refused to accept the constitution Unigenitus. The former have been discountenanced and oppressed without much noise; and those of them that persist, persist in silence and obscurity. The others die off, and are replaced by men more complaisant and more politic. Thus the opposition to this bull will make no figure in history, and the doctrine of it will pass for that of the whole gallican church conforming implicitly to a papal constitution. The pretended explanations, restrictions, and other prevarications, that were employed to trim between God and the pope, will remain in the pamphlets of the time alone, and in the closets of antiquaries. Thus an appearance of uniformity in matters of faith has been, and may be, imposed on posterity, by stifling the proofs of the contrary: and, if this failed, the church would have nothing more to do, to preserve the illusion of uniformity, than what she has done so often and so long; to quote those alone who have spoken the same language as she speaks, and to take no notice

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of others, or to pass them by as heretics whose
suffrage ought not to be brought to account.

THE pope is a general; the clergy a standing
army, which has fought his battles, like other ar-
mies, without any regard to the justice or injustice
of the cause: and the common foldiers of which,
as of other armies, have sometimes mutinied in
particular quarters, the general officers seldom,
the whole, or the greatest part, never. That even
the common foldiers of this army should mutiny,
at any time, may appear the more extraordinary,
because no general ever recompensed the zeal of
private men in his cause more signally than the
pope has done. He procured them free quarters,
and very lucrative exemptions, in every christian
country. He abetted their insolence, and em-
ployed every artifice, as well as his whole power,
to impose on the superstition of mankind an high
conceit of the dignity of this spiritual militia.
One artifice of this sort, the most extravagant
that was ever invented, and the most effectual at
the same time, shall be produced. You may be
surprised, perhaps, when I say it was the doctrine
of transubstantiation.

SECTION XXXIX.

NOTHING could be more intelligible, nor even
to human judgment more reasonable, than
the institution of the Lord's supper; since the sole
design of it was that Christians should comme-
morate

morate in common the death of CHRIST and the redemption of mankind, as well as signify, by participating of the same bread and the same wine, that they were of the same religion, if, as ERASMUS says in paraphrasing St. PAUL, “ videtur agnoscere communem religionem qui communibus cibis vescitur *.” But refinements, and figurative expressions employed about it, made the plainest thing in the world mystical and unintelligible. The effects of the eucharist were made so first, and the very elements, the bread and the wine, became so afterwards. This sacrament was no longer a simple act of commemoration and of profession. It was made a great and dreadful mystery, of which Christians may partake to their damnation, as well as to their salvation. The person, by whom it was instituted, is represented sometimes under images that render it impossible to frame any of the efficacy, or even of the institution, of the sacrament. CHRIST is a vine, he is a rock, nay he is a coat, according to St. PAUL; and we clothe ourselves with him in our baptism, according to St. CHRYSOSTOM. According to the same eloquent father too, he stands to us in the relation of an head, of an house, of a table, and of a root †. Now one of these images alone can give us any imperfect idea of the efficacy of this sacrament. CHRIST is the

* Paraph. in ep. ad Cor. ep. I. c. x. v. 15.

† —CHRISTUM suis esse non solum caput, domum, mensam, radicem, sed etiam vestem quando in baptismo CHRISTUS induatur. Vid. CASAUB. in Exercit.

head of a body, and the faithful are the members. The same loaf is made up of many crumbs, the same body of many members † : and therefore according to St. PAUL's reasoning, all those who eat of one loaf compose one body ||. Thus CHRIST is, in this community, at once the son of God and the brother of man. The brother, but the elder brother, of the elect * : and in the epistle to the Ephesians we are said to be flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, “*ex carne ejus et ossibus ejus.*” These immense and inexplicable advantages are to be ascribed, principally, to the efficacy of this mysterious sacrament. By baptism, we are made partakers of the Holy Ghost. By this sacrament, we are made such of the body and blood of CHRIST. But I will conclude, instead of citing any more particular instances, by borrowing from CASSAUBON some general words, that may serve to shew how high mens notions have been raised about this theological mystery, by the theological abuse of figures. “The eucharisty, rightly taken, is the instrument of that conjunction by which we grow into one body with the Son of God, and with all the faithful—What can be more admirable, what more stupendous, than that man should be thus joined and coalited with God, the creature with the creator, the mortal with the

† *Panis ex innumeris granis sic conflatus est . . . corpus sic ex diversis membris constat.* Paraph. ERASM.

|| *Quoniam unus panis, unum corpus multi sumus, omnes qui de uno pane participamus.* Ep. ad Corin. I. c. x.

* *Primogenitus in multis fratribus.* Ep. ad Rom. viii. 29.

“immortal,

“ immortal, the finite with the infinite, and earth
 “ with heaven? This miracle is greater than that
 “ of creating a world out of nothing*.” I think
 it is; but I think too that it would be as easy to
 distinguish the most extravagant language, that
 platonic or pythagorean enthusiasts ever held, out
 of blasphemy, as these orthodox expressions.

THE yoke of christianity is easy, and the burden
 light. But if theology has shortened the decalogue,
 it has lengthened the creed; and has maintained
 hitherto, in the enlightened ages, such a tyranny
 over the minds of men, in opposition to reason and
 revelation too, as could not be established in the
 darkest without much difficulty. In the case just
 mentioned, concerning the mystical effects of the
 eucharisty, we are required by human authority to
 believe that the most divine and important truths
 are concealed under a variety of figurative ex-
 pressions, which have no conceivable applications,
 at least none that are conceivable to us uninspired
 persons; or else such as cannot be made by us,
 without a profanation that shocks the ear of every
 man who keeps up in his mind an awful sense of
 the majesty of the Supreme Being, nor dares to

* — Eucharistiam legitimo modo sumptam instrumentum
 esse ejus conjunctionis, per quam in corpus unum cum filio Dei
 — coalescimus, et cum caeteris etiam omnibus fidelibus —
 quid magis admirabile, aut magis stupendum, quam jungi, at-
 que adeo coalescere in corpus unum, hominem cum Deo, crea-
 turam cum creatore, mortalem cum immortali, finitum cum
 infinito, coenum cum coelo? Hoc majus est miraculum, quam
 de nihilo mundum creasse.

think,

think, like those whom we call divines, as familiarly and as lowly of God as of man. In the case that is to be mentioned concerning the elements, as they are called, of the eucharisty, your church requires, and the whole christian church did require before the reformation, that we should believe substances, which give us the ideas of bread and wine, both before and after consecration, to be, after it, such substances as give us the ideas of flesh and blood. If we should say that in fact they give us these ideas, we should lie most impudently: and if we should say, as you pretended Catholics do say, that, tho they give us still the ideas of bread and wine, yet they are miraculously flesh and blood, we should talk a language that passes on millions, and yet can pass on no one man who consults his reason impartially, or who considers the proofs of christian revelation by miracles, which are, in truth, appeals to the senses.

WE are all conscious, or very little experiment and reflection will suffice to make us so, that we know nothing more of substances than their effects. God has given us no other way of distinguishing them: and if we abandon that, nothing can be affirmed or denied concerning them. A miracle may change one substance into another, as water was changed into wine at the feast in Galilee. But the accidents cannot remain, and the substance be changed; or to speak more plainly, a different substance must produce different ideas in us. A supernatural operation must be sensible,

ble, or it is no more a miracle than if nothing was operated. The guests at Cana would not have believed that the water was turned into wine, if they had not been convinced of the change by their taste: and if the disciples were convinced, after his resurrection, that JESUS was the same CHRIST who had been crucified, it was because they said that they saw him to be the same, and that one of them probed the wounds he had received on the cross. According to the first example, then, the communicants in your church should eat raw flesh, and the priest by his peculiar privilege should drink warm blood; for the transubstantiation is instantaneous: and, according to the last example, if the elements in the eucharist continue to the sight and taste the same, they are the same bread and the same wine, after consecration, that they were before.

HE who should think to evade the absurdity by insisting that God works two miracles at once, that he changes the bread and wine into flesh and blood, and that, to exercise our faith, he alters the physical constitution of the elect in such a manner, on this occasion, that flesh and blood produce in them the ideas of bread and wine; he, I say, who should think so, would only increase the absurdity by endeavouring to evade it; as they who are in the dirt, dirty themselves more by endeavouring to get out of it. He would assume a miracle and no miracle, or rather a miracle contrived to disguise a miracle, and a fraudulent imposition on our senses
for

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for the excellent purpose of exercising faith against knowledge, and in direct contradiction to all the proofs that CHRIST gave of the divinity of his mission by appealing to the senses of mankind : so that if transubstantiation be true, the whole christian revelation may be false. No one would impute such a kind of proceeding to any man who was not a professed juggler : and yet such a proceeding is imputed to God, by popes, councils, and the whole tribe of your divines. But it is time I should leave a subject that gives me horror, even when I write against it ; and that has been exhausted by abler pens, by that of TILLOTSON particularly, in a short tract preferable to immense volumes. It is time I should remember that my business here is not to refute the doctrine of transubstantiation, but to shew how it came to be established, and the political view of the popes in the establishment of it.

SECTION XL.

TO this purpose, then, I say that a supposed mystery in the elements arose first, like a supposed mystery in the effects of the eucharist, from figurative expression. There is no one, perhaps, in the whole gospel, less liable to an equivocal sense, than that which CHRIST employed when he said, “ This is my body, and this is my blood,” in the very act of giving bread and wine to his disciples who were at supper with him, just before his death, for a remembrance of which this ceremony

mony of a supper was then instituted by him. The figure was easy, the application natural, and they could not understand the expression literally. It is impossible to suppose that they did, unless we suppose them mad: and yet it is this very expression that has been made the foundation of a doctrine, which Hurons and Iroquois, Samojedes and Hottentots, would blush to own, and which has brought disgrace on christianity, if any ever did, as well as innumerable calamities on the christian world. The fathers of the church loved figurative style, and their whole theology is nothing else: but they employed it more to perplex than to explain; and it is not wonderful, therefore, if they seemed to confound the typical, or symbolical, with the real, body of CHRIST. They seemed to do it, or they did it, if you will, sometimes. But when their matter led them to speak with more caution and precision, so many of them, and of the greatest of them, contradistinguished the first from the last, in such plain and strong terms, that it is evident a real corporeal presence in the eucharisty was neither their opinion, nor the general belief of the church in the first ages. Give me leave to add, tho I cite no other particular passages here, because they have been cited by many on the same occasion, that the inconsistency of your church never appears to me more barefaced, than it does when I consider that she has made the writings of St. AUSTIN almost a rule of faith; and yet that this father not only declares, in many places, against her favorite doctrine, which was not
at

at that time a doctrine *, but guards against it, for fear it should become such by a wrong interpretation of the scripture. He brings an example of wrong interpretations that may be made, by quoting these words, “Except ye eat the flesh of
“ the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no
“ life in you.” These words, interpreted literally, contain, according to him, a great impiety. They are to be interpreted, therefore, figuratively. The doctrine of transubstantiation is, therefore, an impious doctrine, according to this father.

BUT how carefully soever the typical and symbolical body of CHRIST in the eucharist was distinguished, on some occasions, from his real body, from the body born of the virgin MARY, which was crucified, which rose from the dead, and which ascended into heaven, they grew to be easily confounded in the minds of men, by the continual use of the same figure without the same explanation of it; and the sign passed for the thing signified among many. This has often happened: and it happened the more naturally in this case, because the imaginations of men being heated with mystery, the doctrine that was the most mysterious was the most likely to prevail. The doctrine, however, of CHRIST’s corporeal presence in the sacrament would not have prevailed, even in the eighth century, very probably, so far as to be established by the authority of a council, if it had not been found necessary to evade an argument that

* De doct. christiana, lib. iii.

the breakers of images urged, and to support the stupid worship of them, as TILLOTSON observes. One synod, that of Constantinople, determined that CHRIST had left an image of his body, the bread in the eucharisty, and therefore no other image of him ought to be made. Another synod, the second nicean, determined, about thirty years afterwards, that the bread and wine after consecration were the body and blood, not the images of the body and blood, of CHRIST; that he had, therefore, left no image of himself, and that other images of him might be worshipped. Zeal for idolatry of one kind propagated idolatry of another: and to the worship of images, which the Christians practised, as well as the heathens, and which the heathens excused, as well as the Christians, the latter added something too absurd, and too abominable, to make a part of the religious rites of the former. They conjured their God into a wafer; they adored him in that wafer; they offered him up in a true sacrifice to himself; and they eat him up, to conclude the ceremony. “ Sit
 “ anima mea cum philosophis, non cum Christi-
 “ anis, gente stolidissima, qui Deum faciunt et
 “ comedunt,” a saying of AVERROES, which no man needs to disown.

ALL this was not established without great contest, nor soon. In the ninth and following centuries, it was much opposed. One of those who opposed it, BERENGER, dean of Angers, and a man famous for learning and piety when there was
 little

little of either among the religious society, had been frightened into a recantation, which he recanted as soon as he got out of the papal hands. It is the less wonderful that he should do so, since the pope and his council appeared to have no very clear notion of their own doctrine, but blundered miserably when they defined it, in contradiction to that which he had taught; and since GREGORY the seventh found it necessary, a few years afterwards, to define over again the pretended orthodox doctrine of the real corporeal presence. He left out of his definition the circumstances of handling and breaking, of grinding and bruising, this body between the teeth of the faithful, as I believe, because they were too shocking to stand in it, and might be insinuated with more advantage when the general doctrine had got prejudice on it's side. They have been so, they are avowed parts of it; and this is the doctrine which was declared orthodox, eleven hundred years after CHRIST, in the latin church, under the ridiculous name of transubstantiation: a ridiculous name indeed, and that bears more analogy to chemistry than to theology. What HILDEBRAND defined, his successors maintained: and INNOCENT the third, who was a pope of the same spirit, procured a most solemn confirmation of it in the numerous council of Lateran, which he held at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and in which so many other things were done to advance his own tyranny, and the superiority of the religious over the civil society. The folly of the holy war was renewed, books of decretals were published

published and authorised, auricular confession was introduced, the cup was taken from the laity : in short, ecclesiastical pride and policy being now come to their height, the whole system of religion became more than ever a system of usurpation ; and ambition improved to her purposes all that superstition and ignorance could be made to adopt. It will be no breach of charity, therefore, to affirm that tho the doctrine of CHRIST's real and corporeal presence in the sacrament owed it's first rise to the abuse of figurative style, and to the disputes of divines on another subject ; yet the solemn definition of transubstantiation was one of those artifices, that the popes employed to raise an high opinion, of the dignity and power of the priesthood. No popes had ever more reason to raise such an opinion, than GREGORY the seventh and INNOCENT the third ; for none ever atchieved or undertook such conquests as these two made at the head of the church over the civil power, both of them in Germany, and the last of them in our island likewise.

WE may say the better that this artifice was contrived for the purpose I suppose, since the prerogative and power of making God himself is not only ascribed, by the writers of your church, to every priest, but an argument is drawn from thence to shew how much reverence ought to be paid to an order of men, the least of whom has a prerogative and power of which the greatest earthly potentates cannot boast. But however this artifice was contrived and conducted, how impudently so-

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ever popes and councils imposed, for an article of
faith, what it is more impious to believe, than it
would be to disbelieve the whole creed, and how-
ever civil and ecclesiastical power united to enforce
it, with all the fury of inquisitions, it never could
gain, from the eleventh, to the sixteenth century, in
which it was rejected with a just abhorrence by
whole nations, a full and quiet possession of the
minds of men in any country; no not in Italy; no
not at Rome. They who had not the front to de-
fend this monstrous doctrine, and yet would not
separate from the church of Rome, had recourse to
the sole expedient that remained. Far from de-
fending it, far from maintaining it as an original
article of christian faith, they chose to put the de-
cision on another point. Many of the most learn-
ed and orthodox, long before LUTHER and CAL-
VIN arose, had declared that men were at liberty
to believe, or not to believe, the manner of
CHRIST's presence in the sacrament to be corporeal
and by transubstantiation: but the popish doctors
insisted that this liberty subsisted no longer, since
the church had defined the particular manner of
this presence, in the council of Lateran. Thus
they tried to change the state of the question, to
deliver themselves from the cruel necessity of justi-
fying blasphemy, and demonstrating contra-
dictions; and to decide the merits of a cause, that
could not be maintained, by those of another that
they thought might be so. In this, however, they
were deceived: and instead of supporting transub-
stantiation by the authority of the church, they
shook

shook the authority of the church, by employing it to this purpose, more than by all the other unworthy purposes to which it had been often prostituted. It was impossible to persuade men that the church had any right to make new articles of faith, and of such a nature as this was especially, under the pretence of declaring those which the scriptures had imposed on Christians: and since it was impossible to persuade, the same violence was used to force this article into general profession, that was employed in the case of arianism. Nay more blood has been shed, and the calamities brought on the world by these contests have been of longer duration, than the others. They are not yet at an end.

SECTION XLI.

WHAT has been said in this essay, and nothing has been said which may not be easily justified, is sufficient to shew that none of the institutions, contrived to preserve or restore peace among Christians, have had this effect even from the first. Those that the apostles made, concerning which tho men talk much they know little, had it not. If the dissensions of christian congregations were such as did not break out to the eyes of the heathens, all was strife and contention within: and the state of christianity continued the same during those ages, when the government of the church had first a great mixture of democracy in it, and when it grew up afterwards into a

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more aristocratical form. The evils strengthened under these forms, and grew quite intolerable under the monarchical. Under that government it became tyranny : and the whole system of christianity, which has been always making, and is not yet made, uniform, became such a system of avarice and ambition, carried on by fraud and violence in their turns, that, new abuses being still accumulated on old, it might have been disputed, whether christian flocks would not have fed themselves better without any pastors at all, and whether the peace of the world would not have been provided for better without any religion at all. It may be asked now, and I expect you should ask, in what particulars the state of christianity has been mended, to the honor of religion and to the good of mankind, since the last expedient designed for these purposes was laid aside by multitudes, and the pope was no longer the spiritual monarch of Christians, nor the center of their union? The question is reasonable : and I will answer it very sincerely.

I THINK then that the state of christianity has been mended to the honor of religion and to the good of mankind, in some particulars, not in all : and that even they who remain in the papal communion have, in this respect, some obligation to those who have separated themselves from it. That so many nations withdrew in the sixteenth century from their subjection to the mock sovereignty and real tyranny of the pope, has been to
the

the honor of religion surely ; since the whole body of Christians is no longer obliged to acknowledge for vicar of CHRIST every man, however unworthy his character may be, whom the most corrupt college on earth elects to that imaginary dignity by a supposed inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It has been to the good of mankind surely, that the independency of the church on the state is taken away in those countries that have renounced all allegiance to the powerful abettor of it, the pope ; and that it is extremely reduced in those that profess to hold the same allegiance still. It has been surely for the good of mankind, and for the honor of christianity, to shew the world that the law of God is immutable, like the author of it ; and that orders, disciplines, rites, ceremonies, and acts of external devotion, means invented by men to maintain and propagate this law, are not only mutable in their nature, but necessary to be altered, on some occasions, in the course of human affairs. It was the more fit surely to convince men of these truths, since they had been led hoodwinked so long by the knavery of the religious society, that they began to think there was nothing immutable in religion so much as the means employed to support it, nor so little as the end. The wealth and grandeur of the clergy, and the superstition of the laity had been, for more than fourteen hundred years, the principal of these immutable means ; and the experience of so long time had shewn that the means destroyed the end. They gave occasion to all that mischief which

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atheistical persons are so ready to impute to religion itself. Without these, disputes concerning doctrines of mere speculation would have made less noise and disturbance in the world, and enterprises of ambition could not have been supported as they have been. To diminish all these, therefore, and to remove an authority which often has, and always may, stand in competition with the supreme authority of every society, are the first steps necessary to establish true religion, good government, and public tranquillity.

As these steps were necessary, so they were just: for the wealth and grandeur of the church had been the free gift of the state originally, and they might be resumed, therefore, whenever they became hurtful, or even unnecessary, with as much justice, and better policy, than they were given. As to the other means, ignorance and superstition; tho every thing necessary to constitute them was promoted, they were not directly avowed like the others. To pretend that the church has a right to the former by compact, or by virtue of any alliance with the state, would be to say whatever comes uppermost in a whimsical head. To pretend that the right to them is divine, may be ranked among a great number of absurd propositions, that are affirmed without proof: and bold affirmation had succeeded so well in this case, that he, who had asked for any other proof, than the authority of those who affirmed it, would have passed for absurd himself.

AGAIN,

AGAIN. Nothing can contribute more to the honor and advancement of christianity, than to reduce the preachers of it, as near as possible, to the terms of their original institution. CHRIST gave his apostles a commission to preach and to baptise, to convert men by the miracles they wrought, and to edify and build up in the faith such as they converted. It does not appear that they, or their immediate successors, exceeded the bounds of this commission. This was their sole employment. The sole wealth they enjoyed, or claimed, was a voluntary contribution, for their maintainance, in the churches which they visited, or wherein they resided: and how moderate this stipend was, may be collected from the practice of St. PAUL, who took nothing from the Corinthians, but lived on what he earned by his trade. The sole power they enjoyed, or claimed, was that of reprovng, and of delivering over to Satan, with the concurrence of the faithful, and not otherwise, such Christians as held false doctrines, or were guilty of enormous crimes. If any pious soul had foreseen, whilst christianity was the religion of a despised and persecuted sect, that it would be the religion of the empire, that emperors and empresses, kings and queens, would be raised up by God to be the nursing fathers and mothers of his church, we may assure ourselves that great expectations of preserving the faith pure and undefiled under such patronages, and of infusing universally the true spirit of christianity

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after such examples, would have been raised. But all the expectations of this pious soul would have been disappointed, as soon as the event happened; for then, on the contrary, the church got, but religion lost; the church was decorated, but religion was disgraced; the cause of one, and the cause of the other, was never more united in opinion, nor so distinct in reality. The nature of that revolution which CONSTANTINE made in the religion of the empire, and the place which this body of men had held in the christian church whilst christianity was the profession of a sect, enabled them to take the lead, and to be the principal agents in it. Thus they fixed themselves at the head of the new establishment. Religion was made subservient to all their purposes; and the wealth and grandeur of the hierarchy were the principal objects of it. They were principal objects always, they were the sole objects at last: and during several ages that preceded immediately the reformation, the whole system of christianity, in our western world, was nothing better than a system of ecclesiastical fraud, working by superstition and on it, under the direction of the bishops of Rome. Many saw this: all who saw it, and were not gainers by the iniquity, lamented it. Was it not time to make use of the first opportunity, which a favorable conjuncture offered, to assert the rights of the civil, against the usurpations of the religious, society? This was done in the sixteenth century. It had been attempted before: but the attempts had been vain, and even now they

they were various ; for as ecclesiastics had taken the lead in establishing, they took it in reforming, christianity. They preserved much of their dignity, wealth, and authority in our church : less in that of LUTHER : less of the latter, in pretension and appearance at least, and none of the two former, in that of CALVIN. The constitution of our church seems adapted to that of a great monarchy : the constitution of the Lutheran to those of the little princes and states of Germany : the constitution of CALVIN'S to the government of a little and poor republic. But popery was renounced in all, the superstitions of it were abolished, and that spiritual tyrant was suffered no longer to encroach on civil sovereignty, nor to drain the wealth of these reformed nations into his coffers.

ANOTHER instance, wherein the reformation has mended the state of christianity, to the honor of religion, and to the good of mankind, is this. Christianity retained it's name, as factions often do when they have abandoned the principles that gained them reputation, or have perverted the best to the worst purposes, because the church of Rome professed to believe CHRIST to have been the Son of God, the Messiah, the redeemer : but then human authority had so controlled divine in the course of many ages, and had been blended with it so indiscriminately to the observation of men who were forbid to consult one, and were taught the duty of being implicit to the other, that this religion was no longer to be found in
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the gospel, but in the canons of councils, the opinions of fathers, and the decrees of popes; authorities that must be contemptible in the eyes of every one who knows what councils, fathers, and popes have been, and who knows, besides, that many of these canons, opinions, and decrees, are either fictitious or corrupted. The first preachers of christianity could not have known it again. Many articles of faith must have appeared to them new: they would not have acknowledged many precepts to be evangelical, nor many institutions and ceremonies to be apostolical. They would have occasion often to say much what SOCRATES said when he heard the *Lysis* of PLATO read. In a word, and to finish up the picture, neither PETER nor PAUL would have known how to administer even the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, unless they had gone first to some seminary of priests for instruction. Now this new-fangled religion the reformation purged; tried it chiefly by the only true criterion of orthodoxy, the gospel, and brought it much nearer to the plainness and simplicity of that which CHRIST instituted*.

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* I say in the text, much nearer to the plainness and simplicity of the gospel of CHRIST; because it would not be true to say, entirely. All the reformed churches renounced their subjection to that of Rome, and asserted their independency. But some of them retained enough of her institutions, customs, and policy, to shew that they had been once members of that body. The churches who valued themselves for going the farthest, and who thought that they could never go too far, in opposition to that of Rome, Calvinists abroad, and their disciples,
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THE honor of his religion, so altered, so abused, and so defaced, required certainly that it

our Puritans, at home, threw off at once, with the outward pomp of the ecclesiastical order, even the decency of forms in the public worship. But then they assumed as great a licence in the interpretation of scripture, as ever had been taken, and exercised as real an ecclesiastical tyranny, under another discipline, as the roman clergy had ever exercised. By affecting to deduce their reformation from the most early times, when gifts of the Spirit were supposed to be common, they ran into enthusiasm; and genuine christianity took as many forms as whimsical teachers could invent. Our english reformers pursued a middle course. They retained much more of the hierarchical order; and when they had rejected many of those superstitious rites and ceremonies, which VIGILANTIUS, a pious and learned Spaniard, had censured, and which JEROM, an impudent and scurrilous^a Hungarian, had defended a thousand years before, with all the ferocity of a modern Hussar; they thought it proper to go no farther, or very little farther, in this part of reformation, and fell, I think, into a great absurdity in another: in that, I mean, which concerns the doctrines of artificial theology, grafted on christianity by this very JEROM, and by the other fathers who went before him, as well as by those who followed after him, some in the third, others in the fourth and fifth centuries; when that art of enslaving mankind with words, to use an expression of my lord BACON, was established: and when that, which this great man applies to philosophical knowledge, might be said truly of theological, that it became “an undigested heap and collection of much faith and accident, mixed with an abundance of childish notions imbibed in youth.”

If we consider what motives our reformers, who boasted of restoring the purity of christianity, could have to keep open those springs from which so much of the impurity of that

^a N. B. ERASMUS would make JEROM almost an Italian, because Stridon, the place of his birth, was not far from Italy. But he may be reckoned more properly an Hungarian; since this place was on the very confines of Hungary and Dalmatia.

should

should be stripped of many rites, ceremonies, and customs which favoured too strongly of heathenism and judaism, or which had been invented manifestly with no other intention, than that of multiplying superstitions, which helped to impose on the people, and were lucrative to the priests. The worship of images was of this number; a worship evidently derived from the heathens; as idolatrous among the vulgar, and not more easily distinguished out of idolatry by the learned men of the church, whose communion they renounced, had been derived; we shall find, I think, that they were two; antient prejudices, and future hopes. They were averse to unlearn what they had been learning all their lives; and they were desirous to retain that pre-eminence, authority, and wealth, which they had enjoyed under the pope, and hoped to enjoy under the king. The church of Rome acts consistently, when she maintains a veneration for the primitive fathers, who maintained the divine institution of an ecclesiastical order, and who invented so much superstitious worship, and so many sham miracles, to establish a sham christianity. But what could protestants mean to maintain the authority of these antient fathers, if they had not all the same purposes to serve? Let us acknowledge the truth. They had them not in the whole, but they had them in part: and for this reason they found it necessary to preserve the credit of fathers and councils, in part at least, and as far, as they wanted their authority. When they wanted it no longer, or when it turned against them, they laid it aside most prudently. They builded up a new church, or modelled an old one, on principles, however inconsistent, that reconciled, in good measure, the ecclesiastical to the civil policy of their age and country: and they, who thought that an hierarchy and a monarchy were necessary to support one another, which was the prevalent opinion of those times, could not have desired a more reasonable institution, than that which our english reformers made, under the direction, and by the authority, of the civil power.

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of new, than of old, Rome. Such again was the use of holy water, which your divines chuse to derive from the water of purification in use among the Jews, and which might be derived as truly, perhaps, from the lustral water in use among the heathens. Such again were the consecration of altars, the celebration of jubilees, and other external observances, which had been so avowedly taken from the ceremonial law of the Jews, that your writers do not scruple to justify them by passages of the pentateuch. In fine, and to quote an instance or two of the second sort; such was the invention of purgatory, and of all the costly means to be delivered from it. Such was the abuse they made even of transubstantiation, which is so great an abuse in itself that one would hardly think it could be abused by any additional circumstances, when it was established not only that priests could make God at any time, but that they might carry him about in a little box, wherever his presence was deemed necessary for public shew, or private devotion.

As the reformation exploded the doctrines relative to these and other superstitious practices, so would it have been much to the good of mankind, as well as to the honor of christianity, if silence on several others, which cause great dissension, had been imposed at the same time. But the contrary happened. The reformed fell out among themselves, and pursued one another with so much bitterness, that they gave no small color

to the pretended catholics, to object to them that they multiplied schisms, broke the bands of christian charity, and disturbed the peace of the christian world, which was better preserved in the communion of Rome. I do not mean to speak here of the disputes that arose among the reformed about religious ceremonies and church-government, which were easy enough to be determined, or indifferent enough to be compounded, in their nature; how hard soever, or how important soever ecclesiastical obstinacy and the spirit of party made them appear: I mean to speak of those disputes that are in their nature not determinable, because there neither is, nor can be, any real determination of ideas about them: disputes, that would be little thought of, or could do little hurt, if they remained undecided, and have done so much by dogmatical and contrary decisions. I might instance in several, in that of justification particularly, and of the doctrines dependent on it, concerning all which so much unintelligible jargon has been vainly employed by popish and protestant divines, and to as little purpose by the council of Trent. But I chuse rather to instance in the case of the Lord's supper. Of this we have spoken already, and it will serve better, than any case less known, to shew in what manner the reformers raised new disputes, left their followers exposed to all the mischief which theological questions have brought on the world, and the atheistical objection as much in force as it was before the reformation they made.

THEY were not content, then, to have rendered transubstantiation as ridiculous and odious as it deserves to be esteemed: they went about to explain, each in his own way, this supposed or real mystery. They who believed there was no mystery in the eucharisty itself, how mysterious soever the occasion of this institution and the spiritual effects of it might be, should have talked, I think, of the bread as bread, and of the wine as wine, which Christians ate and drank in their communion to commemorate, by this ceremony, the death of CHRIST, and the redemption of mankind. They who believed there was a mystery in the eucharisty itself, and that the bread and wine were, after thanksgiving or consecration, something more than bread and wine, nor barely signs or symbols of the body and blood of CHRIST, should have avoided all definitions, instead of opposing definition to definition, and making that a mystery which CHRIST had not made so. But they proceeded in a manner very different. They all acknowledged, if ZWINGLIUS did, that the body and blood of CHRIST were truly received in this sacrament, as the landgrave of Hesse declared to GRANVELLE and others in a solemn conference at Spire*: and by this acknowledgment they put themselves under inextricable difficulties. LUTHER taught that the body and blood of CHRIST were really in the elements of bread and wine, by a consubstantiation, which was said to

* Vid. SLEIDAN Lib xvii.

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last, if I mistake not, during the manducation only. Did the Calvinists talk a whit more intelligibly when they professed, at the famous conference at Poissy, “that in the sacrament of the
“ Lord’s supper, CHRIST gives, presents, and
“ exhibits to us really the substance of his body
“ and blood: that by faith we receive, really
“ and in fact, the true and natural body and
“ blood of CHRIST, by virtue of the Holy
“ Ghost*?” What did BEZA mean when he talked of eating with the mouth of faith? He must mean that he believed that he ate, or he must mean nothing. Now what did he believe that he ate in the same sacrament? Not the symbolical body of CHRIST; for he affirmed that he ate the true and natural body: not the true and natural body of CHRIST; for he affirmed that to be in heaven and no where else. What then did he believe that he ate, or what other sense can be put on those words, “eating with the mouth of
“ faith,” and those “receiving by faith,” than that of believing he ate, and believing he received? His adversaries held a great impiety, but they held it consistently. According to them, the body of CHRIST was in the sacrament by the charm of consecration, and they ate it when they ate the sacramental bread. According to BEZA and his colleagues, the body of CHRIST was not there, but in heaven; and yet they ate it too, really and in fact. This conference broke up abruptly. The fools on one side accused the pro-

* AUBIGNY Hist. univers. Lib. ii.

testants of blaspheming when they deny transubstantiation, just as the heathen reputed those philosophers atheists who were not polytheists. The fools on the other remained convinced that they ate, spiritually and with the mouth of faith, in this sacrament, a bodily substance that was not there; whilst they ate most corporeally a bodily substance, the bread, that was there. Both went away resolved to cut the throats of one another: and such are the effects of theology, that is, of human authority, in matters of religion.

THIS authority has imposed chiefly, when it has imposed, on the minds of men by the abuse of words. This abuse of words makes the sum of metaphysics and theology; imaginary sciences, removed from the controul, as from the assistance, of sense, conversant about hypothetical natures, and about ideas vastly complicated and perplexed. Such theology tintured all the philosophy of PLATO; logic all that of ARISTOTLE. These two schools were the great mints of insignificant terms; and tho ZENO, who did little else than invent new words, and change the application of old, opened another mint of the same kind, yet the coin of the two former has been alone current. The immaterial forms, the eternal ideas, and all the incorporeal essences of PLATO, for instance, were given and received in every philosophical payment, like the substantial forms, the intentional species, or the entelechy of ARISTOTLE, till very lately.

I HAVE often thought that nothing could have happened more fortunately for the propagation of learned ignorance, than the succession of the peripatetic to the platonic philosophy; for tho ARISTOTLE opposed many opinions of his master, yet the subtilty of his logic has served to cover both his master's errors and his own, on more occasions, and at more periods, than one. No writings, certainly, were ever so mad as those of the latter Platonists, which contain the very quintessence of enthusiasm, and which are almost one perpetual abuse of reason and language. Many of the christian fathers came out of the same schools; and all of them using the same delirious style, it became that of christian theology. We must not imagine, however, that the philosophy of ARISTOTLE had no share in framing the system of this theology, tho that of PLATO had the greatest and the earliest. It is true that the original works of the former were unknown in the western church till the fifteenth century, when greek learning was brought into Italy by those who fled thither after the taking of Constantinople. But still ARISTOTLE was at that time rather ill known, than unknown; for in the very beginning of the thirteenth a latin translation had been made, by the direction of the emperor FREDERIC the second, of some parts of his writings from the arabic version of them: and other fragments had appeared in the same language, such as might be expected, in those ages of ignorance, from men,
among

among whom the latin and greek were become very barbarous languages, who understood ill the purity of one, and were little able to explain themselves properly and clearly in the other. If we go higher up, we find ARISTOTLE much better known. He must have been so even by the first of the greek fathers : and his reputation must have been great during all those ages wherein so many of the corner-stones of christian theology were laid ; since he had commentators, themselves philosophers of great fame, among the Greeks, in the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth centuries, ALEXANDER APHRODISAEUS, THEMISTIUS, and others. No doubt can be made of this ; and if any doubt could be made, those nice distinctions, and that perpetual torture of words, for which fathers and councils were so famous, would be sufficient to prove it. They learned of PLATO to talk without any meaning : and they learned, I think, of ARISTOTLE to seem sometimes to have one.

THE logical empire of ARISTOTLE, and the abuse of words, grew up with christian theology : but they were never absolutely confirmed till ignorance prevailed alike in the east and the west, from the ninth to the fifteenth century, when the first dawnings of knowledge began to appear, and men began to see their way in the farther acquisition of it. It may seem strange, but it is true, that the schools which were erected, and the en-

couragement which was given to learning, from the days of CHARLES the great, served only to keep men out of the way of true knowledge, and to impose a false appearance of it. The popes had procured chiefly the foundations of these schools: and the encouragement to the scholars had been derived from them, or through their means. I might have reckoned this among the artifices they employed to carry on their usurpations. Bare ignorance alone was not sufficient to their purpose. It was necessary to promote learned ignorance, and to establish error, with all the circumstances of authority and reverence; lest even the ignorant should stumble upon truth. To keep men from the search of it, they were told, that truth, and divine truths especially, were hard to find; that persons, on whose ability they might depend, were set apart, therefore, to save others the trouble of this search; and that their holy mother, the church, watched over all. Thus revelation and reason both were made the monopoly of the clergy. They doled out the former in such scraps, and under such interpretations, as they thought fit. They employed the latter, not to analyse, not to verify, ideas, in order to compare them, but to take such as have been mentioned above, as it were on trust, like the vile instruments of error: the instruments of error indeed, since, how well soever these comparisons were made, nothing that was true, or complete and adequate, or distinct and clear, could result

from them; and nothing, consequently, that deserved the name of knowledge. In short, they profaned and abused the two noblest gifts of God to man, natural reason and supernatural revelation.

NATURAL philosophy and mathematics made little progress in these schools; experimental philosophy none at all. To turn and to wind the few notions they had a thousand ways, to distinguish imperceptible differences, to refine and subtilise a little real knowledge till it evaporated entirely, and nothing remained but a caput mortuum of words, was their whole business. JOHN of Damascus had brought logic into fashion among the greek divines, and BoëTIUS among the latins, long before the institution of these schools, and longer still before their doctors became famous under the name of scholastics: so that whenever this happened, the same manner of philosophising on logical and metaphysical notions, on technical and insignificant terms, had prevailed in them from their foundation, and had been applied to theology. The men, who applied themselves to it, had some broken and superficial acquaintance with ARISTOTLE at second hand, as we have observed that they might, and even at third hand; for much of it came to them through his arabian interpreters and commentators: and as in every other science, so in theology, they were servilely attached to his principles and to his method. Some have placed LANFRANC, arch-

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bishop of Canterbury, at the head of the scholastic tribe, in the order of time: and if he wrote against BERENGER, in the middle of the eleventh century, we may assure ourselves that ARISTOTLE's philosophy was employed then, as it has been since, to account for CHRIST's corporeal presence in the sacrament. It has been said, I know, that PETER the Lombard, a famous scholastic in the next century to LANFRANC, imitated and followed JOHN of Damascus; tho ERASMUS and others have made a doubt whether he was the author of that work, which procured him the name of Master of the sentences. But such criticisms are trifling, as well as uncertain: for whether this writer, or his predecessor LANFRANC, imitated JOHN of Damascus, or no; and whether PETER the Lombard, or ABELARD, compiled the Sentences, their theology was that of their age and of these schools, and their method was derived ultimately from ARISTOTLE.

THESE schools continued in great fame, and produced in every age, during the course of many, a multitude of writers, some of whom were men of such extraordinary genius, that they might have enlightened, like so many suns, the orb of learning, and have carried human knowledge to the utmost bounds of human capacity. But, instead of this, they served, like so many ignes fatui, to lead men backwards and forwards through the briars and thorns of vain speculations, within the narrow bounds that ARISTOTLE set; as if

truth

truth was not to be found out of these. They checked the growth of true philosophy by bringing into it no new materials from nature: and they corrupted true religion by blending their philosophical speculations, and the vain subtilties of their logic, with divine truths. They thought that ARISTOTLE had left a most complete and perfect system of philosophy: but they seemed to think that CHRIST had left an incomplete and imperfect system of religion. To supply these defects, they made summaries of christian theology, to say nothing of sentences of the fathers and tedious commentaries on them, of commentaries on the bible*, of theological questions and cases of conscience, that are much larger than all the scriptures canonical and apocryphal, and in comparison of which the gospels, nay the whole New testament is but a pocket-book: tho the pocket-book ought to contain every one of these folios, and none of them are excusable for containing more than the pocket-book. I have touched so often already the absurdity, and, as I think, the iniquity, of seeking christianity out of the gospel, of making any criterion of natural religion but the works, or any criterion of revealed religion but the word, of God, that I should say nothing here concerning the last, if I had not often found an answer to it insisted on with a silly air of triumph, by dogmatical persons in their conversation,

* N. B. The exposition of St. MATTHEW's gospel takes up, I think, ninety homilies, and that of St. JOHN eighty seven, in the works of CHRYSOSTOM.

and in writing. What do you complain of, say these persons? Is not the system of christianity in the same case with every other system, of laws particularly? Yes; and that is the very thing I complain of. A system of human law and human policy is the product of human understanding; and therefore incomplete and imperfect, liable to different constructions at all times, and fit to be altered at some. But this cannot be said, without blasphemy, of the christian dispensation; tho it has been muttered by some divines, and has been strongly implied by the whole conduct of the christian church. What is made by man may be explained, supplied, altered, and improved by man. But has the word of God, spoken to all mankind, need to be explained by any man, or by any order of men, who have as little pretence to be thought inspired, as those who are not of their order? Can any human authority supply, or alter, and much less improve, what the Son of God, God himself, came on earth to reveal? Again: is there no difference between my being led into error by human authority which I know to be human, and by human authority which I take to be divine? To take the laws of God for the laws of man, is impious: but is it less so, to impose the laws of man for the laws of God? Surely it is much more so: as one may be impiety without design, and the other must be premeditated.

It is notorious that many great points of christian
faith

faith and doctrine were first taught, or first determined, several ages after the immediate disciples of CHRIST were dead, on the authority of tradition alone, till there was a canon of scriptures; and on tradition and them, when there was one. The trinity, the co-eternity, the co-equality, in a word the sameness, of the Son with the Father, the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, the fires of purgatory, and the real corporeal presence of CHRIST in the eucharist, to mention no more, were of this number. It was lawful to dispute about them all, till the church had decided. Nay ERASMUS * is so indulgent as to doubt if it was heretical in ORIGEN, to make a question whether “the Son and the Holy Ghost are of the same divine essence with the Father, or whether they are only creatures more excellent than all other creatures.” After the church, that is, certain assemblies of ecclesiastics, had decided and decreed, “*post evulgatam ecclesiae sententiam*,” it was lawful to doubt no longer, nor to dispute about any of these points, “*ambigere fas non est*.” They were become articles of faith. They were made such, then, by these decisions and decrees. They were made such, then, by human authority. Not at all, says ERASMUS, or any other divine: they were made such by the scriptures. Whatever is not agreeable to them, is not of CHRIST †; and therefore false interpretations of the scriptures are to be rectified by such as are

* Symb. catech. iv^{ta}.

† Quod aberrat a sacris voluminibus, non est CHRISTI. Ibid. true.

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true*. Now those which the church makes are true: and it is enough for you, and such as you are, to believe firmly all that the church has declared to be necessary†. Roundly asserted indeed, but very fallaciously argued; for whether the interpretations of the church are true, which is assumed, or whether they are false, which is possible, the doctrines established on them are established on human, not on divine, authority. The scripture is the word of God: the interpretation is the word of man. But, besides, I learn from that judicious and orthodox divine Mr. HOOKER‡, and ERASMUS and others of the same tribe speak to the same effect, that all the things necessary to salvation are not necessary to be contained, and set down in plain terms, in the scriptures. It is sufficient that they be comprehended in such sort, that by reason we may conclude from the scriptures all things which are necessary: from whence I conclude, just as I did before, that the great points spoken of have been established on human, not on divine, authority; deduced, collected by reason, or what has been called reason, not expressly taught by revelation.

THAT these great points of christian faith and doctrine were not very evidently deduced, nor very

* Falsa scripturarum interpretatio vera interpretatione refutanda est. Symb. catech. iv^{ta}.

† Tibi tuique similibus satis est ea constanti tenere fide, quae pro necessariis exserte et expresse tradidit ecclesia. ibid.

‡ Ecclesiastical Polity, lib. i.

accurately collected, from the scriptures, may be presumed from the disputes that have been always, and that still subsist, about them. It might be proved too that scripture is not so favorable in many cases, nor more so in any one, to these opinions, than to those that stand in opposition to them; and that the only advantage, which the Athanasians or the Augustinians, for instance, have over the Arians or the Semi-pelagians, is not an advantage which the scripture gives them. They derive it from the suffrages of particular men, whose motives were often not entirely christian, and from the arbitrary dogmas of fathers, and decrees of councils. These opinions, therefore, that are become articles of faith, and that pass for some of the doctrines which CHRIST taught, tho they are nothing more than inventions of fathers improved by schoolmen, may be quoted as so many particular instances of theological presumption, and, I think, impiety*. But call it which

* THERE have been some divines a little more modest than others, since there are some, I think, who have seemed ashamed of their artificial theology, and have endeavoured to excuse rather, than defend, the fathers of their church. The fathers, it has been said, taught the doctrines of christianity in their genuine purity, and affected to teach them no otherwise. The heretics forced them to abandon this pious reserve, in order to defeat the designs of these men, who attempted daily to introduce errors in opinion and practice. Now if this was their case in general, it may have been such even of St. PAUL, who was the father of the fathers; and his gospel may have been writ in the same spirit of contradiction and of dispute. But it is impossible to discover, with certainty, on what points, and in what degrees, artificial theology gave occasion to heresy,

you

you please, or what you please, the proceeding grew more general and more systematical in the schools that have been mentioned. They did not take this licence with particular points of doctrine alone, but with the whole system of christianity. They melted down the whole mass with all the alloy that had been already added to it by others, and they cast it anew with an immense deal of their own. They made it so voluminous, that it was no longer useful: and ERASMUS might well say, “*Quis possit AQUINATIS secundae secundam circumferre **?” They perplexed it with so many bold and indeterminable questions about the di-

or heresy to artificial theology; tho we know, in some measure, what the disputes were, that arose in the christian church, The doctrines that were termed afterwards orthodox, or heretical, were in their origin, no doubt, co-eval, and both grew up together, till one outgrew the other. In general the orthodox fathers had no advantage over the others. If the former had recourse to tradition, so had the latter: and the former were not, certainly, superior to the latter either in learning, or in means of knowledge, or in sanctity of life; great foundations of credibility in such cases as these. ARIUS, for instance, or NESTORIUS, to mention no more, were in all these respects at least equal to ATHANASIUS or CYRIL: and whoever examines the partial accounts of one side alone, for we have none of the other, of all that passed in the disputes that arose whether the Son was consubstantial with the Father, and whether the virgin MARY was properly the mother of God, will find great reason to believe that the two heretics were not the least respectable doctors of the four. Thus we shall be apt to think, if we consult not only antient memorials, but the writings of modern divines, and suffer ourselves neither to be amused by arbitrary epithets and vague declamations, in which the modern imitate the antient fathers, nor to be perplexed by sophistical arguments, in which they sometimes imitate the schoolmen.

* Ep. cccxxix.

vine nature and operations, with so many serious trifles, with so many minute questions about formalities, quidities, and other fantastical notions, that it grew contentious, and more than ever hurtful. In short, they multiplied distinctions and definitions till their manner became as unintelligible as their matter: and my lord BACON might have added scholastic theology to the sciences that sway the imagination more than the reason, such as astrology, natural magic, and alchemy. If the first pretends to discover the influence of superior on inferior bodies, this theology pretended to discover the influence of superior on inferior spirits, by illuminations, inspirations, and the internal action of grace. If the second pretends to reduce natural philosophy from speculation to works, this theology pretended to deduce the duties of man from speculations concerning the moral attributes of God, and to instruct him in the imitation of God. If the third pretends to separate dissimilar, and to throw out heterogeneous, parts of bodies, to cleanse such as are impure, and to perfect such as are immature, this theology pretended to perform much the same operations on ideas, notions, terms. These the professors of it confounded, and distinguished, at their pleasure; and, like chemists or apothecaries, made new out of old, old out of new, one out of many, and many out of one*. Nay this comparison may be carried

* — Pharmacopolarum ritu, ex novis vetera, ex veteribus nova, e pluribus unum, ex uno plura subinde fingentium et refingentium. ERAS, *ibid.*

farther.

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farther. The scholastic divines rendered their art, for such it was rather than a science, as incomprehensible as they could, that they might make a greater profit, and acquire a greater reputation, by it among the ignorant.

In this manner, and by the help of these schools, a theological system, which had no intention to promote the true and holy purposes of christianity, was imposed on an ignorant and superstitious world for the very religion which CHRIST had instituted, and his disciples had propagated. The sole intention, and the sole effect of it was to establish an ecclesiastical empire under that spiritual monarch the pope, and his spiritual ministers the clergy. This was the effect, of that supposed alliance between the church and the state: an effect so natural, that he who pleads for any right in a church, or ecclesiastical order, independent on the state, may be justly supposed to mean this effect in some degree, and under some form or other. The first foundations of this empire were laid in private, the second only in public, conscience. To secure this empire, therefore, it was necessary to keep the first entirely and exclusively in the hands of the pope and the clergy; and, whatever influence the civil power might on some occasions gain over the latter, to take effectual care that it should never be able to gain any over the former. Now nothing either did, or could, contribute more to this great principle of policy, than the conduct of these schools. By wrapping
up

up both natural and revealed religion in the obscurity of metaphysics and of logic, they made themselves the sole judges of both. By sending abroad their disciples under the characters of confessors, directors, casuists, inquisitors, preachers, they had sure means of exercising their judgments, instilling what opinions, and raising what passions, the permanent and occasional, the immediate or remote, interests of the church required. The first duty of the religion these doctors propagated was to believe what the church believed: and what the church believed, they alone had a right to declare. The second duty of this religion was to observe all the ceremonies, and to perform all the external acts of devotion and worship that the church had instituted, or should institute. The third and least was the practice of morality. On the first there was no mitigation nor indulgence. Men were to believe implicitly, or to be treated as enemies to God and to his church in this world, and to be damned eternally in the other. On the second and the third much indulgence was shewn. It was even profuse on the third. Compositions with the church might be made on both, on the breach of her own laws, and on the breach of those of God and nature: and these compositions were so often pecuniary, especially on the breach of the last, that, whilst the church was enriched, no layman, who had money enough to save his soul, could be damned. But there was something still more favorable to vice in the last case. The duties which the church exacted were so particular that they

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could not, and they cost so little to perform that they did not, deserve to be explained away. But the duties of morality were more general, and more liable, by variety of circumstances, to different modifications in the application of them, as they were much harder to be observed strictly amidst the infirmities of human nature. Casuists therefore interposed. They lightened the burden in favor of these infirmities, by all the definitions, distinctions, and exceptions that logic could furnish. They did more. In all cases where the church was concerned, they gave full range to the passions of mankind. Justice was no longer a moral virtue. Faith was not to be kept with heretics. Benevolence or charity were no longer principles of natural or revealed religion. Heretics or excommunicated persons were to be persecuted and exterminated with the most unrelenting fury: and I may defy any man to shew instances of greater inhumanity, and more profligate wickedness, committed by the ferocity of lawless savages, or barbarous nations, than I am able to shew of those which have been committed, not only under the veil of this spurious christianity, but on motives taken from it, and at the instigation of those who taught it. By such means, and with such effects, as these, was an ecclesiastical empire maintained during several ages, whilst churchmen governed conscience of every kind, and by governing conscience governed the world.

THE scholastics had indeed many contests among themselves,

themselves, that were carried on with great animosity, and broke out sometimes into open violence. Such, for instance, was the dispute between the Thomists and the Scotists about the immaculate conception of the virgin; and that between the nominalists and the realists about the nature of universals. How could these disputes, or any other, be determined among men, whose pleasure and whose pride it was to dispute perpetually, and who cultivated an art that was of use to no man in the discernment of truth, but might help the subtil dialectician to pose even the man he could not refute? These disputes, however, were kept among themselves, by the policy, not by the moderation of scholastics certainly: and as long as they neither rent the theological system, nor shook the ecclesiastical empire, the court of Rome tempered, managed, and suffered them, notwithstanding all the scandals they occasioned, in the universities of Oxford and of Paris particularly. But as soon as our OCKHAM, the invincible doctor, began to maintain that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction ought to be subject to the civil, the nominalists were reputed heretics, and the realists alone passed for orthodox. There was as little union among these, as among the others; and religion might seem to be more nearly concerned in their disputes. But, the great purpose, for which all these schools were erected, being the support of the ecclesiastical empire, any doctrines, that reduced or weakened it, were the greatest of heresies. This happened in the fourteenth century,

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when WICKLEF went much farther than OCKHAM,
and laid the ax to the root of a tree, which the
popes had watered with so much care and expence,
and which bore so much bitter fruit: so that, if
the impertinent philosophy and profane theology
of the schools took their rise in our country from
LANFRANC, RUCCLINE, SWINESHEAD, and OCK-
HAM, we may boast that some of the first and
greatest advances towards a reformation of both
were made by men of our country likewise.

FROM the time that OCKHAM had signalised
himself, in a public dispute at Avignon, in favor
of the emperors and the civil power, against the
popes and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction, the no-
minalists were not only more than ever opposed
by the other scholastics, the Scotists especially, but
so persecuted by the court of Rome, and all the
fautors of her usurpations, that their whole doc-
trine was condemned by LEWIS the eleventh in a
public edict before the end of the fifteenth cen-
tury *. The doctors and masters of the univer-
sity of Paris, for the scholastics too, as well as the
rabbins, had the title of masters, were obliged to
renounce the name, with the doctrine, of that sect;
and all their books were burnt, according to the
laudable precaution of the orthodox. The realists,
on the other side, were recommended: and nothing
was neglected on this and every other occasion, that
might keep these schools firmly attached to a
cause, which they had been principal instruments

* MORHOF Polyhist.

of imposing on the world for the cause of christian religion. These efforts, however, proved insufficient. The papal throne was shook, and ecclesiastical empire was in a visible decline. Scholastic divines had supported it in the opinion of mankind, as long as they were favored by general ignorance, even greater than their own. But as soon as learning began to dawn, towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, these birds of night were forced to fly from day, tho they screeched and clapped their wings for a while. It was in vain that modern scholastics prostituted learning, as their predecessors had prostituted genius, to maintain the credit of this theology, and the papal authority connected with it. The task was too hard even for the council of Trent, and for all the great men who have undertaken it since. Nothing supports the system now, except general ignorance in some countries, and the force of civil, abetting ecclesiastical, power, on principles of political consideration among those who are not ignorant. Many a man thinks, many such I have known, that the theology of the schools is absurd, that the monarchy of the pope, tho reduced, is still impertinent and hurtful, and that the abuses of wealth and power in the church are intolerable. But yet the same man will contend that it is better to bear, than to attempt a reformation of, evils that are grown inveterate: and will think that he is strong when he quotes not only the disorders, the wars, and the massacres, which attended and followed the reformation in the sixteenth century, but

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the several ridiculous and mad sects, to the rise of
which this reformation gave occasion, tho the re-
formers condemned them.

I HAVE heard men of good parts and good intentions reason in this manner: I have heard it said by a very respectable man in the gallican church, when he excused rather, than defended, submission to the papal power, that this power is the key-stone of that arch whereon the whole christian system rests, and that the whole building must fall if the key-stone be taken away. I have heard another of the same church, and of the same character, advance, that many things absurd in belief, and ridiculous in practice, were necessary to attach the greatest number of men and women, and especially of the vulgar, to christianity; that men of sense and knowledge ascribed to these doctrines and institutions as little as they deserved; but that men of sense and knowledge ought to consider and distinguish what is for them, and what for the vulgar; that this cannot be done in outward profession, but that every man of sense and knowledge may do it for himself, and should therefore bear with an useful deception. Much may be said in favor of this political reasoning, and much may be said against it. It might have been better, perhaps, if it had been practicable, to reform as ERASMUS would have done, than as LUTHER did. I shall not enter into the controversy; but this I say: Such instances, as have been given, confirm the whole drift of this essay, because they shew the
I mischievous

mischievous consequences of theology, by which an order of men have been able to usurp on God, if I may use the expression, as well as on man; to propagate their own inventions for his revelations; and to assume an authority, to which they have no right, over all the other orders of society, till the fraud and the usurpation were so established, that it was not possible to reject them without falling into some of these calamities which the establishment of them had cost mankind. A melancholy alternative surely: and yet such an one, that the love of truth, the spirit of liberty, and an awful respect for the Supreme Being, ought to determine men to take their resolution in it. When LUTHER and CALVIN, and the other reformers, took this resolution, it must not be denied that affections and passions, and private interests, had their share, as well as the other motives, in determining them to it. Such will be the case in all human enterprises, even in the best: and therefore the issues even of the best are always imperfect. Our reformers shook off entirely the papal yoke, they laid aside and exposed many false traditions and unchristian doctrines. But our reformers had some of the prejudices, and much of the spirit, of the schools about them: and he * was not in the wrong, perhaps, who made the scholastic chronology begin at LANFRANC and end at LUTHER; tho many of your divines and of ours have talked the same gibberish since, and talk it still.

* MORHOF Polyhist.

MAY we not compare the great revolution which happened in the roman church, to that which happened in the roman empire? The empire broke to pieces, some of the provinces became distinct states, asserted their independency, and acknowledged no longer the imperial authority, nor the laws of the empire. But in all these new constitutions there was some tincture of the old, some principles of law, and some of policy, which bore a near resemblance to it. Thus, in the constitutions of our reformed churches, tho they were independent on that of Rome, something remained to shew that they had been once members of that body, as much as they differed now in doctrine and discipline. The church of Rome shut up the bible from the laity. The reformed churches opened it, and declared that the pure word of God was the sole test of true religion, and the sole foundation of theirs. That it is the true, the sole, and the sufficient test of christian religion must be owned; for if it was not, it could not be the word of God, nor christianity the religion of God. But is it certain that this word has been made the sole foundation of our reformed religions? I apprehend it is not. Nay, since, to speak properly, I must say religions, it cannot have been made such. The word of God is one, and one religion alone can be taught by it. If there are different religions raised, there must have been different foundations laid. How are we to account for this? We must acknowledge the truth. Human authority has passed for
divine,

divine, tho not so coercively in our churches, as in yours ; and the uncertain, variable word of man for the infallible, invariable word of God. We freed ourselves from spiritual tyranny, and we fell into spiritual anarchy. The change, however, was advantageous ; since there is, in the nature of things, and has been in this case, a transition, through confusion, into order ; whereas there is no immediate transition from established tyranny into a settled state of liberty.

BEFORE the reformation, Christians knew nothing of the bible more than the church told them. It might, and it might not, be a rule to the pastors : but it was none to the flocks. After the reformation, it was put into the hands of every one. The pastors appealed to it, and the flocks were supposed to judge for themselves by it. What happened ? The very same thing that happened in the primitive church before any canon of scripture was made by public authority, and received by common consent. Various traditions and various doctrines of men, who pretended alike to the gifts of the Spirit, divided the faithful : and every teacher had his followers. Just so at the reformation, various interpretations of authentic scriptures, and various comments upon them, divided the reformers and the reformed. Every teacher had his followers : and some of these affected to preach, as well as pray, by the Spirit. Ambiguous and obscure expressions in the text had the same effect as no text at all : and modern theology broke the uni-

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formity of religion as much as antient, caused as much desolation, and spilled as much blood. The reformed churches persecuted one another, and your church persecuted them all. Atheistical persons, therefore, continue to take the pretence, which every religion gives them, to confound religion and theology, and to ascribe to the former all the evils that are due to the latter.

It is natural to ask, can nothing be done to remove this scandal by putting an end to these evils? I will presume to answer, Nothing; unless men can be prevailed upon to assume the spirit of christianity, as well as the name of Christians: and this will be found, I suppose, impracticable as long as the sole care of religion, and the sole direction of conscience, is confined every where to a distinct order of men, whose distinct interests, and whose passions of course, carry them to keep these dissensions and feuds alive. If they were content to explain what they understand, to adore what they understand not, to leave in mystery all that CHRIST and his apostles have left so, to a time that is not yet come, and to teach others to content themselves with natural theology, and such revealed theology as this; the evils spoken of would soon cease, and the scandal consequently. If they proceeded in this manner, there would be ample matter left to employ their tongues and their pens, and none to employ the swords and daggers of the rest of mankind. The law of God would be a plain and consistent law, and no color would remain

main for infidels to form this argument: “ Either the scriptures do not contain the law of God, or it was not in the intention of God to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, or he did not proportion the means to his end:” every one of which propositions is blasphemy; and yet, as theology has corrupted genuine christianity, it will be hard to evade them all.

BUT since such a change as this may be wished for by good men, rather than expected by any man, it is proper to consider what can be done to lessen an irremediable evil, and whether good policy cannot furnish an antidote against the poison of theology; on which I shall say a word or two before I finish this long essay. There are arguments, no doubt, even of the political kind, and of irresistible force, against atheists who reject all religion, latitudinarians who admit all alike, and rigidists who suffer one alone. If the first prevail, there will be no religious conscience at all; if the second, there will be as many as there are religious sects in every society; if the third, persecution for religion will be made a maxim of government, as it is made in some countries, to the bane of society, and to the shame of the christian profession. Do there remain then no means to prevent the fatal effects of theological disputes, and ecclesiastical quarrels? Some countries are so miserable by principles of bigotry incorporated with those of their government, and by the establishment of inquisitions, that there remain no such means, but
by

by the total extirpation of all those who differ, or who are suspected to differ, from the established doctrines. In other countries, tho a rigid spirit prevails, yet if inquisitions are not established, and if ecclesiastics do not govern, it is very possible by skill and management to allay, for the most part, the ferments which theology is apt to raise in the state, and to blunt the fury of those who call themselves orthodox, and every man who dissents in opinion from them heretical. In countries where this rigid spirit is not that of the government, tho dissention cannot be entirely prevented, the bad influence and effects of it may. To make government effectual to all the good purposes of it, there must be a religion; this religion must be national; and this national religion must be maintained in reputation and reverence; all other religions or sects must be kept too low to become the rivals of it. These are in my apprehension first principles of good policy. The establishment of a religious order subject to the civil magistrate, and subservient to the civil power, not that of a religious society pretending to be the allies, and aiming to be the masters, of the civil, may be reconciled very well to these principles: and sure I am that they may be pursued, not only without persecution, but without the invasion of any one right which men can justly claim under the freest and most equitable government. The parliament of one thousand six hundred and forty one declared, that human laws cannot bind conscience; which is a declaration every sect makes

makes out of power, and none observe willingly in it. But be it so. Human laws, however, may and ought to exclude those men from power in the state, kings especially, who profess a private conscience repugnant to the public conscience of that state. Such men will make use of power, and the better men they are the more, to propagate their own schemes of religion, to strengthen their own party, and to recommend their particular notions about ecclesiastical government: which cannot be done without manifest danger to the public peace. The wisdom of our constitution has therefore joined admirably well together the two most compatible things in the world, how incompatible soever they may have been represented, a test and a toleration; and, by rejecting alike the principles of latitudinarians and rigidists, has gone far to prevent those evils that gave occasion to the objection of atheists: as I hope that I have done in this essay to prove, by considering the nature, rise, progress, and effects of authority in matters of religion, that theology has been always liable to this objection, christianity never. Christianity, genuine christianity, is contained in the Gospels, it is the word of God: it requires, therefore, our veneration, and a strict conformity to it. Traditional christianity, or that artificial theology which passes for genuine, and which we all profess, is derived from the writings of fathers and doctors of the church, and from the decrees of councils. It is therefore the word of men, and of men for the most part either very weak, very

mad,

mad, or very knavish. It requires, therefore, no regard, nor any inward conformity to it. You have, I know, at your elbow a very foul-mouthed and a very trifling critic, who will endeavour to impose upon you on this occasion, as he did on a former. He will tell you, again, that I contradict myself; and that, by going about to destroy the authority of the fathers and the church, which I reject, I go about to destroy the authenticity of the Gospels, which I admit. But if the dogmatical pedant should make this objection, be pleased to give him this answer: that I do indeed admit the Gospels, not on the testimony of the Spirit, like CALVIN, but on that of the fathers and doctors of the church, who not only bear this testimony separately; but, assembled in a council at Laodicea, rejecting many other Gospels, made a canon of these: and yet that his objection is impertinent, since I may receive the Gospels on the credit of these men, of whom I think very little better than I do of him, for authentic scriptures, just as well as he receives the books of the Old testament, concerning which he has started so many idle paradoxes, for such, on the credit of the Jews, tho he rejects their oral law and the fabulous traditions of their rabbins. Thus I shall conclude this long essay, wherein I have recalled the sum of what I have said to you in conversation, and which has, I fear, too much of the loose and wandering air of conversation.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE foregoing Papers, if they may deserve
even that name, and the Fragments of the
same that follow, were thrown upon paper at Mr.
Pope's dictation, and at his desire. They were all
communicated to him in MS. as they were at
London, and he has since not having been
expected and one or two under different heads.

FRAGMENTS

O R

MINUTES

O F

ESSAYS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foregoing Essays, if they may deserve even that name, and the Fragments or minutes that follow, were thrown upon paper in Mr. POPE's lifetime, and at his desire. They were all communicated to him in scraps, as they were occasionally writ. But the latter not having been connected and put together under different heads, and in the same order as the former had been, before his death, if that may be called order; I have contented myself to correct and extend them a little, and to leave them as Fragments, or minutes, in the form in which they appear, tho they might be styled Essays with no more impropriety than those which precede them. They are all nothing more than repetitions of conversations often interrupted, often renewed, and often carried on a little confusedly. The opinions I held are exposed as clearly, as they ought to be by a man who thinks his opinions founded in truth. I thought, and I think still, that mine were so. The more important, therefore, the subjects are, the more necessary it seemed to me not to disguise the truth, especially to friends not easy to be scandalised, even when their own opinions and prejudices were frequently contradicted, and on occasions when freedom of speech could be neither indecent nor hurtful. It could be neither indecent nor hurtful to these friends; nor will it be so, I hope, to those into whose hands these papers may fall after my death.

F R A G M E N T S

O R

M I N U T E S

O F

E S S A Y S.

I.

I Have read again Dr. CUDWORTH's posthumous treatise concerning eternal and immutable morality, which you sent me long ago: and since you ask my opinion of it now, I shall take some notice of those, which this very learned author defends on two subjects, the nature of human knowledge, and the principles of natural religion. On the first I have writ to you already, and on the last you know that I intend to write to you. On both of these I differ widely from the doctor, and am very far from finding any thing in this treatise, which can induce me, in the least degree, to change my way of thinking. On the contrary, the great principle on which he proceeds seems to me of the utmost absurdity, and the consequences deducible from it at least as dangerous, perhaps more so, to the foundation of all religion, than
the

the consequences that flow from the doctrines he opposes.

CUDWORTH enters into the dispute between DES CARTES and his opposers, who have triumphed exceedingly over him for saying, “ I do not think
“ that the essences of things, and those mathema-
“ tical truths which can be known of them, are
“ independent on God; but I think, however,
“ that they are immutable and eternal, because
“ God willed and ordered that they should be so.” It is more probable, and it is more candid to believe that this philosopher was in earnest, than that he was in jest, when he advanced this proposition. He might think that he took the best, if not the strongest, side in dispute, and approve his own intention in the choice he made; as it deserves to be approved by every sincere theist, and modest enquirer into matters of the first philosophy, even by those who are not of his mind.

IF DES CARTES was to arise, and to answer for himself, might he not distinguish between immutable and independent? Might he not say that these truths are immutable, because they affirm what is conformable to that universal nature whereof God is the author, as he is of that intelligence by which they are perceived; and that they are therefore, in a proper sense, both immutable and dependent? immutable, as much as the nature is to which they belong; dependent, on that Being by whose energy this nature began
to

to exist, and is preserved. He might own himself afraid to assert, notwithstanding the decisions of schoolmen, or the decrees of councils, that there can be any entity whatever, or any thing in any being whatever, which is independent on God. He might lament his own fate, to be accused of atheism because he employed, in physical hypotheses, matter and motion alone; tho he always supposed a first mover, and had proved, by a demonstration he thought good, the existence of an all-perfect Being: and to be thus accused by men, who presume to maintain that they have other objects of knowledge, besides the existence of an all-perfect Being, which exist by the necessity of their own natures, and independently on him. He would reject most certainly, with some of that sourness which he had in his temper, as well as in his countenance, the imputation of betaking himself to a pitiful evasion. He would shew, with great force, that his apprehension of admitting any thing independent on God into the corporeal or intellectual system, is a most reasonable apprehension, and no bugbear, as the doctor calls it. He might shew, perhaps, the profane consequences of such metaphysics as the doctor's, by citing, among others, this assertion from the treatise we speak of here: "the eternal
 " and immutable wisdom in the mind of God is
 " thence participated by created beings independent upon the will of God." He might insist that, since "the wisdom of God is as much God
 " as the will of God," and the will, by consequence,

quence, as the wisdom, it is absurd to distinguish them; and that it is something worse than absurd to reason about the divine, as we reason about the human, intellect; to divide and parcel out the former on the plan of the latter. If the will of man is blind, dark, plumbian, flexible, and liable to be seduced, is the will of God to be conceived in the like manner? And, if it is not, why are we led to conclude that a superior faculty is necessary to determine it, as the judgment of reason does, or should, determine that of man? The anti-ents thought matter eternal; and assumed that the demiurgus, or divine architect, composed the frame of the world with materials which were ready prepared, and independently on him in a confused chaos. Much in the same manner, such metaphysicians as the learned CUDWORTH have imagined a sort of intellectual chaos, a chaos of eternal ideas, of incorporeal essences, independent on God, self-existent, and therefore co-eval with the Supreme Being, and therefore anterior to all other natures. In this intellectual chaos, God sees, and man must endeavour to see, the natures, the real essences, of things: and thus the foundations of morality are laid higher than the existence of any moral agents, before there was any system of being, from which the obligations to it could result, or to which they could be applied: just as the same philosophers suppose the incorporeal essences of white and black, for instance, to have existed when there was no such thing, as color; and

and those of a square and circle, when there was neither form nor figure.

DES CARTES would have broke off the dispute by acknowledging, what he had acknowledged before, that “all these things are unintelligible to us,” and that by consequence all dispute about them is impertinent. I should have gone away confirmed in my opinion that there is nothing in any kind of being, which does not depend on the supreme, immense, all-perfect Being, nor any nature which does not depend on the Author of all nature; tho I felt, at the same time, the difficulty of maintaining this opinion by argument. Mr. LOCKE observes how impossible it is for us to conceive certain relations, habitudes, and connections, visibly included in some of our ideas, to be separable from them even by infinite power. Let us observe, on this occasion, how impossible, or at least how extremely difficult, it is for us to separate the idea of eternity from certain mathematical and moral truths, as well as from such as are called necessary, and are self-evident, on one hand: and, on the other, how impossible it is to conceive that truths should exist before the things to which they are relative; or particular natures and essences, before the system of universal nature, and when there was no being but the super-essential Being.

GOD knew, from all eternity, every system, corporeal and intellectual, that he created in time.

He knew by consequence, for he ordered, the various manners in which all the parts of these systems, and the systems themselves, should operate on one another, the relations they should have, the proportions they should bear, the ideas they should communicate to creatures fitted to receive them, and capable of knowing only by them. All this he foreknew; but all this did not therefore exist: such an existence was at most eventual, and depended on the will, not the knowledge, of God; if we may distinguish them, to be a little more intelligible. These immaterial forms and essences, if any such there were, and these immutable truths, for such there are most certainly, could not begin to exist in any proper sense till those systems of nature, to which the former are said to belong, and from which the latter do manifestly result, were called into actuality: and, in short, I cannot persuade myself that DES CARTES asserted without good reason, tho he has been much censured for asserting it, that God is the author of the essence, as well as of the existence, of all that he created *.

* WHAT I have been led to say on this occasion makes it necessary to explain myself a little more fully; for tho I dare not assert, like metaphysical divines of your and my communion, that the essences of things are in a strict and proper sense independent on God, any more than their existence; nor am able to conceive a dependency of existences or beings, and an independency of essences or manners of being; yet am I far from assenting to DES CARTES in all he has advanced on this subject and on matters relative to it. He has pushed hypothesis, and even truth itself, into chimera. There is a sort of knight-errantry in philosophy, as well as in arms. The end proposed by both is laudable; for nothing can be so more than to redress

If what has been said should be called hypothetical, it must be allowed to be less so, and, at the

wrongs and to correct errors. But when imagination is let loose, and the brain is overheated, wrongs may be redressed by new wrongs, errors may be corrected by new errors. The cause of innocence may be ill defended by heroes of one sort, and that of truth by heroes of another. Such was DON QUIXOTE, such was DES CARTES; and the imaginary character of one, and the real character of the other, gave occasion to the two most ingenious satirical romances that were ever writ.

IN one of these, a chinese mandarin meets some disciples of this philosopher as they travelled through the moon to those imaginary spaces, to that third heaven, where his thinking substance was employed in building a new world, or the model of a world, on his own principles of matter and motion, whilst his extended substance lay buried at Stockholm, or at Paris. The mandarin had contracted acquaintance with father MERSENNE in a former journey, had read the metaphysical meditations, was instructed in this part at least of the cartesian philosophy, and the judgment he made of it I own to be mine. It contains opinions that seem to my apprehension most evidently false, and paralogisms so much oftener than demonstrations, that, when I am of the same mind, I am so, frequently, for reasons different from his, and even contrary to them. Thus, for instance, I take it to be evidently false that we have certainty of knowledge whenever we have clear and distinct ideas of any thing. Our ideas are often clear and distinct, and at the same time fantastical. Examples may be brought of such as we receive immediately and passively from outward objects, and of such as the mind frames by it's own activity: for that which GASSENDI acknowledges of himself, in his objections to the third meditation of DES CARTES, must have been alike true of others. Many things had seemed to him so clear and distinct that he held them for undoubted geometrical truths, which he was obliged afterwards, and on a further examination, to reject. To what purpose now is it said that an attribute, which we perceive to be contained in the idea of any thing, may be affirmed of that thing with

same time, to convey to the mind ideas and notions much more intelligible, than all that meta-

truth? Such an attribute may be affirmed with metaphysical truth of the most fantastical idea. But the difference between metaphysical and real truth is great: and tho we have the former on our side in affirming the attribute, yet the whole must be chimerical if the idea be so; and such a process of reasoning may confirm us in fantastical, it cannot lead us to real knowledge.

THIS happened to the author of these maxims, the first of which is false, and the second precarious and uncertain, when he attempted to demonstrate the existence of God. I do not believe that he meant to weaken this great truth by employing a sophism to prove it; but I believe that the affectation of novelty led him into a paralogism, or an undesigned sophism. He assumed that he had in his mind a clear and distinct idea of an infinite all-perfect Being; that this idea has an objective reality, or, in plainer terms, a real object, which may be known by the idea alone, and without any further proofs; and that necessary existence is contained, as indeed it is, in this idea. From all this he concluded that an infinite all-perfect Being exists, and is the cause of this idea which represents himself.

Now that such a being exists, and that he can want no perfection conceivable or inconceivable by us, may be, and has been, demonstrated invincibly. But to say that he can become the object of a clear and distinct idea, is to advance a groundless paradox. We may know very certainly that there is a figure which has a thousand sides: but no man will say, I think, that his mind represents these thousand sides to him in one clear and distinct idea, nor that he has any other than a general and confused notion of this figure. Much less will any man, who is not a sworn Cartesian, pretend that he perceives in his mind a clear and distinct idea of the infinite all-perfect Being. He knows in general that there is such a being, and that to suppose there is not, implies contradiction, or rather many contradictions. He has particular ideas and notions of some of the divine perfections, well determined as far as they extend, and yet inadequate. There are others which he cannot so deter-

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physical jargon which Dr. CUDWORTH employs, after his grecian masters. Is it any thing better

mine ; and he knows that there are many of which he can have no conception at all : for I do not agree with the chinese philosopher, nor with the Jesuit who makes him speak, that there are any which seem incompatible to him, unless it be when he determines ill the ideas he has, or when he pretends to have ideas he cannot have ; and that we are apt to do so often, the very examples, which are brought to shew an incompatibility in the divine perfections, are sufficient to shew.

To believe that there is a God, we must be taught this great principle of all religion, and receive it on authority. To know that there is one, we must go through a process of reasoning that connects certain evident truths intuitively together, and so arrives at demonstration. Tho the atheist does not connect them into a demonstration of God's existence, yet he knows them all to be truths, as well as the theist. He knows that they result from the nature of things. He pronounces them therefore immutable and eternal, as he conceives that nature to be ; and can take no side in the question, whether they are dependent or independent on God, since he acknowledges no God. The theist makes a better use of these truths ; for he connects them into a demonstration of God's existence, and, instead of acknowledging the truth of no proposition, like DES CARTES, till he discovers the truth of this, he finds by experience that he could not have discovered the truth of this, if he had not antecedently known and acknowledged the truth of many others. He owns several necessary truths not written nor imprinted on his mind, but such as he has framed by observing the agreement and disagreement of his ideas, and such as he concludes every other man, who has the same faculties, and the same perceptions in his mind, must necessarily frame. He calls these truths eternal and immutable relatively to that system of nature from which they result. But he cannot call them independent as properly and as consistently as the atheist may, since he acknowledges a first cause, an author of this and every other system of nature.

ARISTOTLE, who acts a part as well as the chinese man-
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than jargon, to tell us that our ideas of white, or black, which we receive from outward objects ;

darin in the scenes of the romance I quote, when he comes to examine those assertions of DES CARTES, “ That the essences
“ of things, and the truths called necessary, are dependent on
“ God, and that they are immutable and eternal in no other
“ sense than this, that God willed they should be so,” supposes that the french philosopher could mean to speak of no essences except those of created beings, nor of any propositions except such as are advanced concerning them. That this was his meaning no doubt can be made : and he explained it sufficiently when he said “ God is the author of the essence, as well as of
“ the existence, of his creatures.” But even with this meaning the Stagyrte, or rather the Jesuit, is not contented. DES CARTES should have reflected, he says, that truths, which regard the essence of created beings, have a necessary connection with those which regard the essence of God. He brings an example. “ That the creature is essentially dependent on
“ God,” is, he says, a proposition which belongs to the essence of the creature. “ That God is the absolute master and the
“ free cause of all beings,” is a proposition which belongs to the essence of the Creator ; and yet that, if one of these could be false, the other might be so too. Now surely the want of reflection was, in this case, on the side of ARISTOTLE himself. “ If one of these propositions could be false, the other might
“ be so too.” Agreed, but not for the reason he gives, a supposed necessary and general connection between truths that regard the essences of created beings, and truths that regard the essence of the divine uncreated Being. The reason is, that these propositions are in truth identical, that the first belongs to the essence of God as really as the last, and that to say the creature is dependent on the Creator, or the Creator is absolute master of the creature, is to affirm the same thing. Their essences are infinitely distant, but they are connected by this relation ; and all other connection of them is purely imaginary.

WE know the relation of the Creator to his creatures, and of the creatures to their Creator. But to talk of a necessary connection between truths that belong to the essence of one and the essences of the other, seems to be little else than
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our ideas of a square, or a circle, which we acquire by the help of our senses likewise; or our

metaphysical nonsense, and the language of men who seek to evade what they cannot explain. When God made the animal world, he made substances whose essences are unknown to us. Even our own is so. What now is the necessary connection between the incomprehensible essence of the supreme, self-existent, all-perfect Being, and those of created substances which he has not given us the means of knowing, or between truths that belong to either? When God created finite extension he created all the possible modes of it, and, among the rest, that of a space included within three lines, which we have observed, and have called a triangle. By contemplating this figure, we discover the various properties of it, and are able to demonstrate several truths concerning them, as the equality, for instance, of these three angles to two right angles. What now is the necessary connection between finite extension in the several essential modes of it, and an infinite but simple unextended spiritual substance, such as we conceive that of God to be in his ineffable manner of being? What is the necessary connection between true and false propositions relative to one, or the other?

On the whole, we may conclude in favor of DES CARTES, that he imagined no such absurd connection; and thought himself therefore at liberty to assume what he did assume concerning the dependency of created essences, as well as existences, on God, who is, according to him, the efficient cause of the truth of all true propositions about them. Truths relating to God always have been, and always must be, the same. They are absolutely from all eternity, and to all eternity, independent on his will, for he is what he is, by the necessity of his nature; and self-existence is part of his essence. But nothing of this kind is applicable to the creatures. They might have been, or not have been; and the supposition of their non-existence implies no contradiction. It is true, indeed, that whilst they exist, they are what God made them to be; and omnipotence, that can destroy them, cannot alter their essences. These essences, however, and the truths con-
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ideas of just and unjust, which we frame on experience, are incorporeal substances, eternal ef-

cerning them, are not so absolutely independent on God, as the adversaries of DES CARTES pronounce them to be; for even in the hypothesis, that God had no other share, nor exerted any other power, in the great work of the creation, than that of calling essences he could not create into existence, by creating the things to which they belong; these essences are still indirectly, if not directly, dependent on him, and he is doubly the cause of those truths which we affirm concerning them, as he called the essences into existence, and as he created beings capable of perceiving them.

THIS distinction between existences and essences, the former of which, that are dependent on the will of God, drew the latter, that are independent on his will, along with them into the system of things that are, is not very clear. Might not the obscurity be taken away by taking away this distinction, and by understanding essences to be nothing more, than manners of being determined by the power that gives the being, and manners of conceiving determined by the power that forms the conceptions? When God made limited extension, he made it capable of receiving various modifications, and of producing various appearances. These we distinguish by names for our own use. We call them circles, for instance, or squares, or triangles (I speak not here of substances, for with their real essences it is not pretended that we have any thing to do) and when we have given them these names, philosophers assume that they are real essences, independent on God, tho he is the author of all extension, and gave us faculties to perceive these forms of it.

It would be tedious, and needless, to speak of the doctrine of the schools concerning essences. I shall content myself to make one observation more on this head. The combinations of ideas which are distinguished by the term of mixed modes, and are principally of the moral kind, have no bad title to be esteemed essences. We compound them, we can therefore decompound them; and the real constitution of every species of them cannot be unknown to us. They are not,
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fences, independent natures, things ingenerable and unperishable, according to PLATO and

however, essences like those which several philosophers have imagined, from PLATO down to CUDWORTH, and others infected by the same metaphysics. They are not ingenerable, nor immutable, nor unperishable in a proper sense; for, if they were so, these effects would be more perfect than their cause, since the human mind is their cause, and in some sort their creator, and since the human mind is none of these. They are not independent neither on the will of God. They are abstract complex notions. Such Mr. LOCKE gives us leave to call them, “as by a peculiar right appertaining to the understanding*.” The mind makes them arbitrarily and occasionally, by virtue of a power to conceive things in this manner, which God has bestowed, and directed to the improvement of general knowledge. There they fluctuate: they are not the same essences in every mind, nor always in the same mind; and if they answer their purpose in any degree, that degree is proportionable to the mental power of conceiving things in this manner which God has given us. Thus even the truths we call necessary, the *eternae veritates* of which we boast, are one way or other dependent on the Supreme Being. Their necessity is not antecedent, but consequential, to the existence of material and intellectual created natures. Their necessity arises from a conformity to these natures, which we are made able to discern intuitively in certain cases.

BUT it is time to conclude a note too long perhaps already, tho I have hurried through it, and touched the matter of it more lightly than I could have done. I do not pretend to decide the question between DES CARTES and his adversaries. All I would inculcate is this, that since his opinion may receive a reasonable interpretation, it should not be condemned as absolutely, and as dogmatically, as it has been; and that it becomes a theft to incline always to the side which ascribes the greatest possible power to God, from that which has even the appearance of limiting it by assuming an independency, when a dependency on him implies no contradiction.

* Lib. iii. c. 5.

ARISTOTLE, and which the former, as TULLY expresses his sense, “negat gigni, sed semper esse, “et ratione et intelligentia contineri?” Is it any thing better than jargon, to tell us that “these “substances, essences, natures, are the primary “objects of science, and the same too with the “intellect that knows them; that they are uniform modifications of the human and of the “divine mind, and that altho the former be created, yet the knowledge it has is a participation “of that one eternal, immutable, and uncreated “wisdom? In short, is it any thing better than jargon, to talk of “ectypal prints, and derivative signatures from one architypal intellect or “seal, like so many multiplied reflexions of one “and the same face made in several glasses?”

ACCORDING to such philosophy as this, we may, and we must, pierce into the mystery of God's nature, and into the depths of his wisdom, to arrive at a knowledge of his will relatively to man. We must found the principles of morality, not on our knowledge of what our Creator has done, but on our knowledge of what he knows. We must not consult his will as it is signified by the constitution of the system wherein he has placed us, but we must abstract ourselves from this, and deduce our moral obligations from an eternal reason, from the immutable and independent natures of things. We must contemplate the same architypes according to which our system of being was made, to know how we are to conduct

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ourselves in it: and thus the same rule becomes common to God and man. Our knowledge is no longer human, it is divine. It is no longer derived from outward impressions, and inward operations; our ideas have no longer their distinct archetypes existing out of the mind, or formed in it; they are all the impressions of an architypal seal, that is, of the divine intellect. A strange method, surely, of proving our ideas, if not the knowledge we acquire by them, to be independent on God.

I CANNOT soar so high as PLATO and CUDWORTH. I will not sink so low as PROTAGORAS, and other antients; as HOBBS, and other moderns. The former amaze, instead of instructing, me; and, if I understand the latter, I only understand them to know that they impose on themselves, and would impose on me, the grossest absurdities. Strange extremes! When CUDWORTH holds up the metaphysical glass to my eye, I see something, I know not what; something that glitters at an immeasurable distance from me. When HOBBS holds it up, he changes the position: and I see something monstrous at the very end of the glass.

As whimsical, and as little intelligible, as the doctrines of the former are, they may lead men to think that, the will of God, signified by his works, not being the sole true criterion of moral good and evil; and since there is another criterion antecedent to this, nay, even the criterion of it, that is,
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the eternal reason of immutable independent natures; they ought to have an entire regard to these, and none to the will of God signified by his works: because in them he has done little else than clothe these eternal uncreated essences with a garment of existence, “*fartoris instar rerum essentias vestire existentia.*” CUDWORTH declares against this absurd conceit, which ARISTOTLE too chastises. But then what did the good man, and all those who have held the same opinions, mean? To answer truly, they thought, as men deep in imaginary science are apt to do, that they had much meaning when they had really none.

AFTER sounding loudly in our ears, and repeating dogmatically, that things are what they are by their natures, eternal, immutable, and independent on the will of God; they are driven to distinguish, that they may avoid all mistake, as they pretend, and to assert, not what their words import, but something which their words do not import, nor can be said to import any where out of the schools. When they talk of natures by which things are what they are, they do not mean, it seems, as any vulgar man would have thought, the constituent essences of things, the real natures by which alone things can be what they are. They mean something which is not a nature nor essence, but something which schoolmen and philosophers have been pleased to call so. When they say that things are white by whiteness, triangular by triangularity, or just by justice, and that omnipotence itself can-

not make them white, triangular, nor just, without such certain natures; a man who is no metaphysician, nor logician, must be induced to think their meaning to be, that God makes things, dependent on him, to exist conformably to natures independent on him. If they were not thought to have some such meaning, they could be understood to mean nothing more than this, that things are white, triangular, and just, because God has made them white, triangular, and just; and that omnipotence itself cannot make black, square, nor unjust, what omnipotence makes white, triangular, and just. These are most immutable truths, no doubt, and deserve to have their place at the fountain-head of science. But these philosophers do not mean by their eternal, independent natures, any natures at all. They mean such intelligible essences, and rationes of things, as are objects of the mind. Now, the objects of our minds being nothing but our ideas, it follows that these natures, so much talked of, are not natures, but simple or complex ideas of natures: and all the incorporeal substances vanish into air, that is, they are confessedly phantastic, not real. They are merely certain abstract ideas which philosophers have taken it into their heads to affirm that they frame; and in which affirmation I may have leave to be of opinion that they deserve no more credit, than a man who is in any other delirium. They who are as subtile as ARISTOTLE or CUDWORTH, who can discover, with the first, that sense is the same with sensible things; and, with both, that un-

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derstanding is the same with the things understood, may find out, likewise, that the nature of a thing, and the idea of that nature, are one and the same. But I suppose that they, who preserve their common sense free from the taint of metaphysics, will not easily conceive that their ideas, however general or abstracted, can be called, with the least propriety, immaterial essences, incorporeal substances, eternal, immutable, and so on.

It is an observation of Mr. LOCKE, that “ we
 “ have very few abstract names for our ideas of
 “ substances ; and that the few which the schools
 “ have forged, could never get into common use,
 “ nor obtain public approbation : whereas all our
 “ simple ideas have abstract, as well as concrete,
 “ names ; and so have our ideas of modes and re-
 “ lations.” From hence that great author infers
 a confession of all mankind, that they have no
 ideas of the real essences of substances, and a de-
 claration, that their simple ideas, and those of
 modes and relations, are real essences, or the ideas
 of real essences. Now, the truth of the supposed
 confession I admit entirely ; but the truth of the
 supposed declaration is not so evident, and requires
 some explanation as it is expressed. It is, if I
 mistake not, in part false, and in part true ; and
 serves neither Mr. LOCKE’s purpose, nor Dr. CUD-
 WORTH’s, even where it is true. To argue from
 the use of words to the reality of things, is no very
 sure method. Languages are framed by the vul-
 gar, not by philosophers : and when names are
 improperly

improperly given, and words come to be improperly applied, custom establishes them soon, and they easily mislead even the minds of philosophers. The subject before us affords an example of this sort, and if we examine it a little attentively, we shall find a corner of Mr. LOCKE's system about ideas, rent and torn, but the whole fabric of Dr. CUDWORTH's demolished to the foundations.

WORDS have been invented and applied, and names have been assigned, as men wanted them, or fancied, by mistake, that they wanted them, to communicate their ideas with more precision, or even to conceive them more distinctly. Whatever advantage has been procured to the improvement of knowledge by the first manner of proceeding, much confusion and error have arisen from the second: innumerable instances of which there are. One of the greatest, and of the most pernicious in its consequences, we find in the use and application of the word abstraction. There is a very practicable operation of the mind, by which we are said to abstract ideas, and by which we do, in effect, generalize them in a certain manner, and to a certain degree, by substituting one as representative of many. There is another supposed, but impracticable, operation of the mind, by which some philosophers have made themselves and others believe, that they abstract, from a multitude of particular ideas, the idea of one general nature or essence, which is all of them and none of them: whereas, in truth, tho they can define general na-

tures or essences in very clear propositions, they cannot frame an idea of any general nature, which is not a particular idea of that nature.

SINCE men do not commonly employ abstract names for their ideas of substances, it is a shrewd sign, indeed, that they are not conscious of any ideas of substances made by the second kind of abstraction, as Mr. LOCKE observes, but content themselves, in this case, with general ideas made by the first. To talk of nominal essences, and the abstraction of such, comes too near the gibberish of the schools about genera and species: and if it does not coincide with the doctrine of certain essential forms, or moulds, wherein different things are cast, as it were, to constitute different natures, it perplexes the understanding, and darkens the plainest objects of it but little less. If we lay aside these refinements, and think for ourselves, we shall soon discover, unless I am extremely mistaken, that the former method of abstracting or generalizing our ideas, is the universal practice of mankind; and that the latter is purely imaginary, not only in the case of substances, and of simple ideas, whereof the real essences are, in my opinion, equally unknown to us, but in the case of modes and relations, whose real essences must of necessity be known to us, since our understanding frames them.

NOTHING can be more true than what Mr. LOCKE himself confesses, that “ general and uni-
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“ verbal belong not to the real existence of things,
 “ but are the inventions and creatures of the un-
 “ derstanding, made by it for its own use, and
 “ concern only signs, whether words or ideas *.”

On this principle I proceed; but it will not carry me to all the consequences my master, for such I am proud to own him, deduced from it. Let us consider substances in the first place. We have innumerable ideas of particular substances, and I need not stand to shew how little improvement we should make in knowledge, and how impossible it would be to reason, or to communicate any reasonings about them, by the help of such ideas alone. How then does the mind proceed? As these complex ideas are innumerable, so are they beyond measure various. Out of this variety the mind selects such as have a more remote, and such as have a more immediate, resemblance; and classes them accordingly. From this operation of the mind has arisen the school distinction of genus and species. Now, to speak according to it, which we may do intelligibly on this occasion: as the mind is unable, by abstraction, or any imaginable way, to comprehend any one species, and much more any one genus, under one general idea, it comprehends each under one general name, and we say, for instance, man, or animal. The mind does still more in the former case; for, all the ideas that compose a sort or species having a close resemblance to one another, the mind substitutes one, as I said above, to represent them all. This

* Essay, lib. iii. c. 3.

ideal man is neither PETER nor PAUL ; it is not the idea of any particular man ; it is a particular idea of man made general by the application. The archetypes of this phantasm are without, and it is abstracted, if you please to use the word, from them. But it is so far from being an abstract universal idea of man, abstracted from those particular forms, or complex phantasms, which the mind represents to itself (as CUDWORTH, affirms against intuitive knowledge) that it is one of these very phantasms. It is not, in short, an idea of humanity. The mind creates it to supply the want of an idea we cannot have. A general universal idea is inconsistent with the real existence of things : but such a particular idea of that which may exist becomes itself an archetype, according to which we include, in the same ideal class, or exclude out of it, the objects that strike our senses. Thus it becomes general, by the use the mind makes of it, tho it be particular, and be signified by a particular word.

THE mind proceeds in the same manner with respect to all the other sorts or species, into which it has classed its ideas of substances. But with respect to kinds, or genera, this cannot be. They may be, and they are, comprehended under distinct general names ; but none of them can be represented to the mind by any particular phantasm or idea, as in the other case. How should there be one common archetype for things that have not a close, but a very remote, resemblance ? Such are
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the various sorts which every kind contains : and therefore when the mind would advert to the idea, as well as to the name, of animal, it finds itself disappointed. Far from having any abstract universal idea, it has not so much as a particular idea that may be generalized, and stand in the place of the other.

THERE are two other operations which the mind performs not constantly, but occasionally. The first may serve to facilitate the communication of knowledge : the second has served to nothing but to facilitate the introduction of error. From the names that signify particular sorts, we deduce sometimes, and as the mind has need of them, adjectives, or concrete terms, that fix and appropriate to each sort whatever belongs to it, or is meant to be ascribed to it. Thus from man we derive human, and we speak of human figure when we would signify the figure peculiar to him, and of human passions when we would apply those to him which belong to him, tho they are, at the same time, common to him, and to other animals. But the schoolmen have not stopped here. They have invented words to signify, very confusedly and falsely, what was signified very distinctly and truly before. Thus, for example, they have coined the terms, humanity and animality. If they meant to signify, by these terms, nothing more than what we know to be comprehended under the names of man and animal, I should have no objection to the use of them, nor to those of tableity,

cuppeity, and gobleity, when custom had established them, as much as DIOGENES scoffed at PLATO for introducing them into philosophy. But PLATO did mean something else, and so has many a deep metaphysician and logician since his time, and after his example. They have not meant only those appearances, according to which the minds of men have sorted things, which Mr. LOCKE calls nominal essences, and which, he says, are the abstract ideas their names stand for; but they have meant real essences, intelligible natures, the patterns and archetypes, according to which every thing is what it is. The first is, to me, unintelligible; for I neither comprehend how essences can be purely nominal, nor how words can be abstract ideas: and the second is, I suppose, at this time, an exploded opinion among rational men. In short, he must know his own mind very ill, or, knowing it well in other instances, must be strangely deceived in this by the prejudices of imagination, who can persuade himself that the words humanity and animality have any other ideas annexed to them than the words man and animal. When the first raises any idea in the mind, it is one of those complex phantasms that have been mentioned, and that draws after it successively, but rapidly, the ideas of all those qualities, corporeal and intellectual, which are signified when we join to them the term, human. When the second raises any idea at all there, a confused huddle of ideas rush into the mind at once: an assemblage of several species of animals that throng together,
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like those which throng about ADAM, in the famous design of Mr. JOHN OVERTON, to receive their names from the first of men, who became thus the institutor of nominal essences.

BUT now, if it should be confessed, that we know nothing of the real essences of substances, and therefore can abstract no such ideas of them as some have pretended; if it should be confessed further, that nominal essences are nothing more than general names of particular things, not made by abstraction, but by imposition; yet still it would be asserted, perhaps, that our simple ideas are real essences; that the mind is able to abstract their general from their particular natures; and that we give them, for that reason, both abstract and concrete names; the truth of which latter propositions I should take the liberty to deny, as well as that of the former. Our simple ideas, not one of which it is in our power to make, or to unmake, may be called, properly enough, intellectual atoms, the principles or materials of our whole intellectual system. Matter, and the atoms that compose it, have been thought eternal, and if we assume that they were created in time, we must assume too that they were created at once. The same atoms, specific in number, as well as of specific natures, pass through all the changes, and take all the various forms, which we observe in the material world. There is no new, no continued, creation of them. But we know, consciously, that there is a continued creation of these intel-

lectual atoms, that is, of simple ideas, in the intellectual world, in different minds, and even in the same mind, neither specific in number, nor, perhaps, always exactly so in nature: and thus they are not only combined, as the former are always, with one another, that is, with the same, but new ideas that arise from new perceptions, enter very often into these combinations. There is another difference to be observed, much more to our purpose. We can analyse more easily, and with greater success, our complex into simple ideas, than we can decompose substances. In one of these operations, we go up to the intellectual atoms. In the other, we stop far short of the corporeal. To what now is this difference owing? Is it owing to our strength, or to our weakness? Is it a difference, as it may appear at first sight, in favor of the human mind? Much otherwise. It serves only to shew the deficiency and imperfection of our simple ideas, of the first principles of all our knowledge. If these were not so confined, and so superficial, as they are most evidently; if they were extended to more objects, and made their impressions on us from a spring that lay deeper in the nature of things, we should know much more than we do concerning the composition and decomposition of substances. If they were real essences, or the ideas of real essences, we should be acquainted with the real essences of substances, at least to a certain degree: for, what do we mean, when we say, that we have no knowledge of the real essences of substances, except these two things?

We

We mean certainly, that we have not a number of ideas sufficient for the acquisition of such knowledge; and thus the deficiency of simple ideas causes one half of our ignorance about the complex ideas of substances. We mean, likewise, that the simple ideas, which we perceive by the impressions of outward objects, are often false, and always inadequate to the nature of these objects; and thus the imperfection of simple ideas causes another half, at least, of our ignorance about the complex ideas of substances.

SIMPLE ideas are real essences. Of what? Of simple ideas? of themselves? Just so certain metaphysical ideas are real ideas. They are really in the mind; but they have no other reality. Such essences and such ideas are chimerical alike. All our simple ideas arise from sensation and reflection, from the impressions of outward objects, and from the operations of our minds. What the powers are that make these impressions on the mind in a passive state, we know as little as we do, what those are to which the operations of the mind, in an active state, are due. But this we know, the powers that cause are more properly essences, than the simple ideas that are caused by them. An essence is that by which a thing is what it is. We have an idea of white, we know what it is in our minds: but do we know by virtue of what it is, what it is there? Certainly we do not. It is not so much as the idea of any knowable essence: how can it be itself a known essence?

essence? or, what seek we further than to know that it is a sensation?

SUCH concrete names were necessary to be invented, not to signify things that exist by themselves like substances, but to signify qualities, so we usually call them, that cannot exist independently of some substance in which they appear to exist, and are conveyed to the mind in the complex idea of it.

As it is real or apparent want that determines the invention and use of names, so there have been some, and may be more, invented, to signify, by one general word, and to appropriate to one substance, all the particular ideas that men conceive to belong to it, or desire to apply to it. This has been observed already: and here we observe further, that these terms are limited by the substance to which they are applied, human by man, golden by gold, and so in some, not in many, other instances of sorts or kinds, just as custom has decided. It is not much otherwise in the case of the concrete terms, which signify each one simple idea. The complex idea of man was in the mind, before the word human was invented to signify, without the trouble of enumerating them, all the particular ideas comprehended in that complex idea. The substantive gave occasion to the adjective. So the complex ideas of all those substances that communicate to us, among other simple ideas, those of white and black, for instance,

instance, were in the mind before the names of these simple ideas were invented. This was enough for use : and our ideas, when these names were invented, as well as the names of the several substances to which they belonged, were enough determined and distinguished. But the schools were not thus contented. They endeavoured to establish the doctrine of general natures abstracted from particular ; and since they endeavoured it, without success, in the complex ideas of substances, they resolved to do it in the case of our simple ideas : and thus whiteness and blackness, and all the abstract names of simple ideas, were confirmed in general use.

THE same simple ideas being communicated to us from a multitude of different substances ; and being observed to be the same in the child, and in the man, in the peasant, and in the philosopher, they might easily pass for adequate ideas of real natures imparted to all the substances wherein they were perceived. Thus the vulgar might think very naturally ; and, in fact, not only children, but much the greatest part of men, are firmly persuaded, that the idea of white, which they perceive in snow or milk, is whiteness in the snow or milk. Nay, this opinion, exploded as it is at present, has been that of the great oracles of philosophy, and many puerilities have been grounded on it, which are scarce yet a-while laughed out of the world. They who saw formerly, or who see now, the impropriety of these words, in
a phi-

a philosophical sense, as they denote real essences, or abstract ideas of such, may have thought, however, not only that the use of them is of some conveniency in language, but that it is a very harmless concession to the vulgar. They may have thought it too an indulgence of no great moment to the doctors of abstraction, who have refined themselves, on this occasion, as philosophers do sometimes, into vulgar error.

WHITENESS and blackness seem to stand in the same degree of a supposed abstraction with humanity, and color with animality. This would be admitted by some, whilst others would contend that it is practicable, with application and a strong effort of the mind, to abstract general natures of sorts or species from any particular ideas that we perceive to be the same in substances of different sorts or species, as, in the former instance, that of whiteness or blackness, they say they do; but that it is impracticable to abstract such a general nature from many particular ideas that we perceive not to be the same, tho co-existing in the same substance, as in the instance of humanity they say they cannot. They would contend further, that tho it be practicable to abstract the general natures even of kinds, as well as the less general natures of sorts, where simple ideas are alone concerned; yet it is impracticable to do the same, where the various sorts that compose the kind are so many complex ideas, as in the instance of animality they say they cannot.

But,

But, I think, we may affirm all this to be whimsical and false alike, without entering into the dispute between these doctors of abstraction, and on this single principle, whereof we have an intuitive knowledge, That things cannot exist in our minds as it is impossible they should exist in nature. Now singulars do, but universals, about which so much noise has been made in the schools, and so many good heads have been broken formerly in the universities of London and of Paris, do not exist in nature. It is therefore as impossible to abstract ideas of whiteness or blackness from all white or black things, as it is to abstract an idea of humanity from all human existence; or an idea of color from all things colored, as it is to abstract an idea of animality from all animal existence. In all these cases, having no real essence to abstract, we have nothing to abstract.

LET us consider, whether we are able to make such abstractions, when real essences are known to us, as they are in modes and relations. For my part, I know that I am not. I am utterly unable to elevate my mind from particulars to generals, as we must do in order to acquire Dr. CUDWORTH's apodeictical knowledge, of which therefore I must be content to remain deprived. I know the real essence of triangularity, and can define it in one short proposition. But to contemplate triangularity, abstracted from every triangular figure, is to my narrow and weak mind as impossible as to contemplate humanity, abstracted

stracted from every human figure, and every human quality. He who can frame the idea of a triangle, which is neither right, obtuse, nor acute-angled, nor, in short, of any triangular species, but is all, and none of these, at once: he, I say, if in truth there is any such he, must be of a species different from mine, as surely as he would be so, if his sight could pierce to the center of the earth, or discern every frozen inhabitant of Saturn. Triangularity is so far from being no particular triangle, that it is every particular triangle: and no man, as I presume, can think of a space included by three lines that meet at three angles, without thinking of some one or more particular triangles. Triangularity can be no otherwise represented to the mind. The definition gives particular ideas, but is not itself an idea. I know the real essence of justice, and can define it several ways, as, for instance, by saying, after TULLY, "*Justitiae primum munus est ut ne*
cui quis noceat, nisi laceffitus injuria; deinde
ut communibus pro communibus utatur, pri-
vatis autem ut suis." But what then? Do these definitions, or their contraries, a conformity to one or the other of which constitutes every action just, or unjust, form, in any mind, one abstract idea of justice? We can contemplate each of these apart, and compare any particular action with it; but we cannot abstract any general nature, with which we may compare every action that falls under some one of these definitions. Justice is a word that denotes particular
natures,

natures, under a general term, but expresses no general nature.

IF there were such general natures as are supposed, they would exist in the mind, and be perceived there. They do not exist in the mind; for they are not perceived by it. They exist then no where, whatever PLATO might dream, or might say hypothetically and poetically. The mind creates real essences for it's own use; but that the mind abstracts, even from these creatures of it's own, any general natures, is a mere poetical fiction, which has been adopted, like many other fictions, of the same author, for a philosophical truth. All the real essences we know are so far from being uncreated, that they are creatures of the human mind; they are so far from being independent, that they are dependent on the will of man, as far as concerns their existing or not existing; they are so far from being ingenerable, unperishable, and even immutable, that they begin to be, and cease to be, in the mind; and that whilst they actually exist there, if they were not maintained by distinct names, and by a constant attention of the mind to them and to their names, they would fluctuate and vary without any precision or steadiness.

WHEN the Stagirite declared most dogmatically, that he would have HERACLITUS, CRATYLUS, and PROTAGORAS to know, that, besides sensible things, which they supposed always to flow,

flow, and he admitted to be always mutable, there were other beings or entities, neither subject to motion, corruption, nor generation, but immovable essences, the objects of theoretical knowledge, of the first philosophy, and of pure mathematics; when he spoke in such high terms, I say, the flowing philosophers might have told him that intellectual beings or entities were very much given to flow, as well as sensible things; and that immovable essences, how well soever fixed by definitions, were not always immovable even in his own mind, since they did not appear to be strictly so in his writings.

AFTER saying so much about these abstract ideas, I must freely confess that I scarce comprehend what they are intended to be. They are separate from matter, according to ARISTOTLE. They are free from all corporeal sympathy, according to CUDWORTH. Nay they are, even those of them whose real essences we know, such as triangularity and justice, imperfect ideas, ideas that cannot exist, ideas wherein some parts of several different and inconsistent ideas are put together, according to Mr. LOCKE. Thus abstraction becomes as great a mystery in philosophy, as any that religion holds out to us: and I am so little able to unfold mysteries, that I might sit forty years together in deep meditation over-against a white wall, as a Chinese philosopher is said to have done, and to as little purpose as he, if I pretended to unfold this inexplicable sort of abstrac-

abstraction. Who can help smiling, when he is told that by the help of such ideas, and of certain self-evident maxims, knowledge is a comprehension of things proleptically, or by way of anticipation, or *à priori*; and that abstraction is that higher station from whence the mind comprehends things in this manner, from whence by its subtle sharpness it penetrates into the essential profundity of body, of sphericity, triangularity, etc.

STRANGE effects of mysterious abstraction! Strange foundations of eternal and immutable morality! They might be rejected with contempt, if they were absurd only; but they are carried so far that they become profane, a sort of metaphysical blasphemy, and deserve indignation. Could I suspect the least necessary connection between such opinions and the proofs of God's existence, I should not treat them as familiarly as I have done, and intend to do. But there is nothing which shocks me so much, in the treatise I speak of, as the attempt to prove in a circle, that since universal notions, the supposed immediate objects of science, are eternal and necessarily existent, there is an eternal and necessarily existent mind; and that, since there is such a mind, there must be such ideas and notions as the author assumes. But it may be worth while to set this reasoning down a little more at large.

“ SINCE we cannot conceive that there was ever

“ a time when it was not yet actually true that
 “ the three angles of a triangle are equal to two
 “ right angles, or that equals added to equals
 “ produce equals, and the like in other instan-
 “ ces ; these intelligible natures, these necessary
 “ verities, had a being before the material world
 “ and all particular intellects had any.” Again :
 “ Since these natures, these verities, are, accord-
 “ ing to PLATO, nothing but noëmata, objective
 “ notions or knowledges, that is, in good En-
 “ glish, objects of thought, they could not exist
 “ without some mind in which they were com-
 “ prehended. There is therefore an eternal mind
 “ which comprehended them always, or rather a
 “ mind which is itself these natures, these veri-
 “ ties, these abstract ideas.” Thus again, and
 to reason quite round the circle : “ Since there
 “ is an eternal mind, that Being must always
 “ comprehend himself, the extent of his own
 “ power, the ideas of all possible things. Now
 “ these natures, these verities, are included in
 “ these ideas. Our abstract ideas and universal
 “ notions are therefore eternal and self existent
 “ like God himself. If there were none such,
 “ there would be no God. But there are such,
 “ because there is a God, on whom however
 “ they are independent. They cannot be modi-
 “ fications of matter, they must be therefore mo-
 “ difications of an eternal mind. Every thing
 “ that is imperfect must needs depend on some-
 “ thing that is perfect in the same kind. There
 “ is therefore a cognation, or connection, be-
 “ tween

“ tween our created minds and the increated
 “ mind. Our imperfect intellect must be there-
 “ fore a derivative participation of the perfect in-
 “ tellect.”

THIS rhapsody of jargon is faithfully extract-
 ed, and, for the most part, in CUDWORTH's own
 words.

A CLOSE affinity between the divine and the
 human mind, and a certain sameness of ideas and
 notions, is the common boast of metaphysical
 theology: and father THOMASSIN, and many
 other learned and good men of all communions,
 have talked as profanely on the subject as CUD-
 WORTH. Their very great learning seduced them
 into error: they were too good scholars to be
 good philosophers: and whilst their minds were
 filled with the thoughts of PLATO and ARISTO-
 TLE, of St. AUSTIN, and other refining, as well
 as declaiming, christian fathers, there was no
 room for their own; or their own were grafted
 on these, and extended and improved from them.
 “ La passion même que nous avons pour la verité
 “ nous trompe quelquefois, lorsqu'elle est trop
 “ ardente. Mais le desir de paroître savant est
 “ ce qui nous empêche le plus d'acquérir une
 “ science véritable.*” It is father MALBRANCHE
 who speaks thus: and he was himself a great ex-
 ample of what is here said; for tho his sublime
 genius could not stoop to copy servilely, as others

* Recherche, etc. Lib. ii. p. 2. c. 7.

have done, yet he took his hints and his manner from PLATO and St. AUSTIN principally, and added one beautiful whimſy to another, till he builded up a ſyſtem that carries no conviction to the mind, and only ſerves to give great admiration of the author.

II.

OTHER divines, beſides CUDWORTH, have aſſumed that God knows according to our manner of knowing, by the help of ideas. Thus CLARKE, in his book of Demonſtrations, which has had much more reputation than it deſerves, aſſumes that goodneſs and juſtice in God are the ſame as in our ideas, and that the relations, proportions, and rationes of things are abſolutely and neceſſarily what they appear to be to the underſtandings of all intelligent beings; among whom he muſt needs comprehend the Supreme Being, ſince he makes theſe relations, proportions, and rationes of things to be the rule or law by which God proceeds, and for his obſervation of which he appeals to man. Thus he affirms, at leaſt, that God knows by the help of ideas. But MALBRANCHE outſhoots him, and confines the ſupreme all perfect-Being to this human manner of knowing. He allows him no other. He denies that he can have any other. The ideas of bodies and of all other objects “*que nous n'appercevons point par eux-mêmes,*” becauſe they are exterior to the ſoul, are perceived by us
for

for no other reason but this, they are in God : in him we see them. All the ideas of created beings must be in God : it was absolutely necessary that they should be so ; because if they had not been so, he could not have created such beings, “ *Puisqu'autrement il n'auroit pas pû les produire.*” He could no more have made ADAM, if he had not had the idea of ADAM in his mind, than KNELLER could have painted your picture, if he had not had the idea of you in his mind.

HEATHEN divines built their theology, not only on physical, but on moral, philosophy. They made gods, not only of the elements and the parts of this material system, but of the faculties of the human intellect, as of memory ; of the passions of the mind, as of hope, fear, love ; of our affections and habits, as of piety, of justice, of virtue, and so on. Now it seems that if this antient polytheism and idolatry was to be renewed, the doctrine I have combated would contribute extremely to the introduction of it. These abstract ideas, every one of which is an eternal essence, an intelligible nature, an incorporeal substance, might pass for proper objects of adoration ; since they are represented as eternal patterns, according to which all things are made or done ; as eternal principles, by a participation of which every thing is what it is. Why should they not be adored ? They are independent on God : nay God is so far dependent on them, that

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his will is determined, and his conduct and operations are directed, by them.

OUR proneness to measure all other beings by ourselves grows up into strange extravagance when we presume to measure in some sort even God by this rule. God has given us a manner of knowing fitted to our system, and sufficient for all our real business in it. We can conceive no other. But is there then no other? Is the positive nature of God, is the extent of his power, confined to the limits of our conceptions? There is “an eye which never winks, a sun which never sets:” but, with Dr. CUDWORTH’S leave, the absurdity lies on the side of the philosopher who pretends to see with this eye, and to walk in the brightness or lucidity, to use his word, of this sun; not on the side of a modest and humble theist, who is far from all metaphysical presumption and theological arrogance, and therefore dares not assume so much in his own favor, nor in favor of any created being. Such a man will think that he makes a much more apposite simile, when he says that we are shut up in one of those dark caverns of the universe, mentioned in the *Phædo*; that there we grope about after knowledge, not by the light of the sun, but by that of a small and dim taper. This light, whatever it is, was bestowed on us by God. He gave us our light. He did not give us his own. They who think in this manner cannot be suspected of being too near a kin to those antient theologues ARIS-

TOTLE speaks of, who fetched the original of God and all things out of night. They who think in the other would do well to consider whether they are not too near a kin to those, who have promoted in all ages, of heathenism and of christianity, superstition in religion, paradox in philosophy, and enthusiasm in both.

It may be said, you know it has been said by one I love and honor*, “that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, there is no inconvenience in saying that God knows objects, that he knows ideas in the proper sense of the word, which is LOCKE’s sense; that although our conception of God’s knowledge, or any other of his attributes, be infinitely inadequate, yet he saw no absurdity in supposing that human knowledge hath some similitude to the divine, as a thing finite, and imperfect, and weak, and small, can have to that which is infinite and all-perfect; nor in supposing, with the scripture, that we are made in the likeness of God; nor in supposing, with the greek poet, that we are his offspring; and, with the latin, that we contain divinae particulam auræ.” It seems evident to him, “that intellect is above the powers of motion and figure, and that it is of kind altogether incorporeal.” I respect the authority which made this objection to what I have said, and shall therefore go as far as I can in submission to it. I see no inconveniency in

* B. of C.

speaking of the divine ideas, when we speak of the divine knowledge. On the contrary, I see much conveniency in it; because I apprehend that we can neither conceive any thing, nor explain our conceptions on many occasions, concerning God's knowledge, without ascribing to him hypothetically the sole manner of knowing that is known to us. But I think it, however, both absurd and profane to pronounce dogmatically, that this is God's manner of knowing, that he has no other, and that without the help of ideas he could neither govern the world as he governs it, nor have made it as he made it. To say, in allegorical or poetical style, that we are made in the image of God, that we are his offspring, or that we contain *divinae particulam aurae*, may pass for some of those images by which we endeavour, and often improperly enough, to help our own thoughts, and the communication of them: but surely they are not to be employed in the didactic style, and so as to pass, not for distant images of truths that we cannot contemplate nearly and directly, but for real truths which we do so contemplate. I do not believe that matter can draw intellect, to use an expression of L'ABBADIE, out of it's own bosom; neither do I believe that the incorporeity of the soul can be proved from the non-existence of matter, which my right reverend friend takes to be a demonstrable point. Intellect is certainly above the mere powers of motion and figure, according to all the ideas we have of them; and therefore I embrace very readily

dily the opinion of those who assume that God, who has, without any color of doubt, notwithstanding some logical and trifling cavils, the power of doing it, has been pleased to superadd to several systems of matter, in such manner and in such proportions as his infinite wisdom has thought fit, the power of thinking. Every other hypothesis seems to me unconceivable; and this, of which so much has been said here, particularly dangerous. It might serve to introduce polytheism, or it is not very far from spinozism. I could be an anthropomorphite, and believe the human figure to be God's figure, as soon as I could believe the human intellect to be God's intellect, and the modifications of the former to be the modifications of the latter. If I was absurd enough to be persuaded of this, I should be absurd enough easily to believe, with the help of intelligible natures and incorporeal substances, or substances quasi incorporeal, as many Gods as men; and to erect a larger pantheon than the gods of the heathen or your saints require. If I avoided this extreme, the same hypothesis might draw me into another, and I might persuade myself that, since there is an universal mind, in which all ideas are contained, and of which every particular mind is a participation, every intelligence, down to the lowest, is a modification of the same mind, as every material system is a modification of the same matter; which would bid fair for a composition with SPINOZA: and two substances might render a Supreme Being as unnecessary as one substance, to
which

which the modifications of both kinds are ascribed in a manner less conformable to our ideas, and much more repugnant to theology.

I HAVE as good a right to deny, as the most dogmatical writer can possibly have to affirm, that the Supreme Being knows by the intervention of ideas. Nay the negative is more probable than the affirmative on many accounts, and particularly on this, that our manner of knowing seems neither immediate, absolute, nor perfect enough to be ascribed to him. To talk positively of the divine nature and attributes, and to determine, on our supposed knowledge of them, any thing more than we are able to collect from his works, and the proceedings of his providence, is very great presumption, tho the common practice of divines. But to deny concerning them whatever implies the least defect or imperfection, is highly reasonable, and essential to true theism. Of the excellencies of God's nature we can have no adequate ideas: they are infinite. But this we can know most certainly, that those things, which are short even of the excellencies we are able to comprehend, ought not to be ascribed to him. That the first cause of all things is an intelligent cause, may be proved invincibly *à posteriori*, and can be proved no other way: after which it will not require much logic to demonstrate *à priori* that the all-perfect Being must be omniscient, as well as self-existent. But how he knows, or what knowledge is in him, we are unable to say. We may
frame

frame dark and confused notions of knowledge vastly superior to our own in kind, as well as degree; and we should do much better to rest in these, dark and confused as they are, than to frame others, which, being deduced from our own, are seemingly too adequate to be really true. The past, the present, and the future, as we conceive them, are known alike to the Supreme Being, not by the perception, the retention, or the anticipation of ideas, but in a manner inconceivable by us: for there is, I think, a plain fallacy in this expression, that the immediate object of knowledge being called an idea, we may say that God knows an object, that he knows an idea. When we speak of objects of human knowledge, we allude to the sense of seeing; and we apply, very properly, the allusion to the inward perceptions of the mind. But surely no man, who tries to elevate his notions of the all-perfect Being as much as he can above the low level of humanity, for so I will call what we know of the human nature, can think the same allusion applicable to the Divinity. Outward and inward sense have a great connexion in the human system. The former gives occasion to the latter, they help one another, and both have their objects. But it will no more follow that God thinks like man, than that he sees like man. He may have conscious knowledge of all things possible, as we have conscious knowledge of our own existence, a knowledge which prevents even thought, so far from being originally, whatever we make it afterwards, an object of thought. But further. When

God

God is said to know objects, he is said to know ideas. The words are taken synonymously on this occasion. But we must distinguish them. A knowledge of things as they are, and a knowledge of the ideas of them, are extremely different, as different as immediate and reflected light, as absolute and relative knowledge. Every thing we know is known to us in the second manner; nothing in the first. Every thing is known to God in the first: and he has no need of knowing any thing in the second. As it would be absurd to say that God receives ideas from external objects, so is it no less absurd to say either that the divine mind combines and abstracts ideas, or that complex and abstract ideas exist in it, or co-exist with it, like so many incorporeal independent substances, by the contemplation of which God has, and PLATO and his scholars assure us that man may have, real knowledge.

THESE hypothetical reflections, on which I lay no more weight than they deserve, will serve at least to shew how little ought to be laid on those dogmas to which they are opposed.

IF the Supreme Being does not know by the help of ideas, the chain of Dr. CUDWORTH's reasoning is broke in the first link of it; for there are then no such eternal abstract ideas, either in or out of the supreme mind, as have been supposed; and all the incorporeal substances, with the verities clinging like ivy about them, that have been
said

said to exist eternally and independently, neither exist, nor ever did exist, out of the imaginations of metaphysicians, those fruitful nurseries of phantastic science.

SHOULD any one ask, like CUDWORTH, and the sixth objector to the metaphysical meditations of DES CARTES, at what time it was not yet actually true that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, or when it began to be true that twice four are eight? it would be a full and sufficient answer to say, that the time when neither these truths, nor the ideas from a comparison of which they result, did exist, was that wherein God had not yet created any intelligence whose manner of knowing was by the intervention of ideas, and that these ideas began to exist when such intelligent beings were actually created. There never was a time when two and two were unequal to four: But there was, we may conceive, a time when their equality did not exist, because no numeral things existed, nor any mind to compare them except the supreme mind; which, being assumed not to know by the help of ideas, can no more be said to compare than to perceive them, or to perform any operations about them. If he who made this answer was pressed by arguments drawn from the consequences of it, he would have at least the advantage of retorting arguments drawn from the consequences of the other hypothesis, and of shewing that he, and those learned divines he opposed, were in a case very common to theists and atheists

in their disputes. He had difficulties in his way : they had absurdities in theirs. He would own the difficulty of accounting for knowledge independently of ideas : but he would demonstrate the absurdity of maintaining that knowledge in God is dependent on ideas, and these ideas independent on him. He would have the further advantage of stopping his inquiries where the means of knowledge stop ; of confessing his ignorance, and of preserving that awful respect for the Supreme Being which divines are apt, above all other men, to lose by reasoning about his nature and his attributes, as well as his providence, in a style and manner that no other theist presumes to use, and to which they have no better pretence than that which the taylor gives them by making gowns for them, and coats for every one else.

WERE men, even they who affect to examine like philosophers, and to investigate truth in all the recesses of it, less ignorant of that which is nearest to them, of themselves, and less liable to be blinded by their affections and passions, by the force of habit and the determining influence of self-interest, it would not be so easy as it is, to impose such high opinions of the human, and such low opinions of the divine, nature. In attempting the first, metaphysicians and divines run the risk of having the conscious knowledge of every man opposed to them ; for every man knows, or may know, that the faculties of his mind, and his means of knowledge, are not such as they would persuade

persuade him that they are. Every man has reason to suspect, from the natural imperfections, from the accidental infirmities, from the sensible growth, maturity, and decay of that which thinks in him, and from it's apparent dependence on the body, that his soul, whatever it be, has no affinity with the all-perfect Being. To maintain therefore an opinion of this affinity, the same persons have recourse to another method, from man, whom we can see, to God, whom we cannot see; from man, of whom we have intuitive, to God, of whom we have demonstrative, knowledge alone, and which goes little further than a certainty of his existence, and of his infinite power and wisdom, but not so far as to reach his manner of existing, or his manner of knowing. The knowledge of men is confined to ideas. They cannot raise it higher in imagination, in their own, nor in that of other men. They try therefore to reduce the divine knowledge to their own low level; and, as strange as it is, it is true that they succeed.

LET them not succeed with you and me. This world, which is the scene of our action, is the scene of our knowledge: we can derive none that is real from any other, whatever intellectual worlds we may imagine. Let us consider then how it is constituted, in what relations we stand, to what ends we are directed. Let us trust to pure intellect a little less than we are advised to do, and to our senses a little more. When we have examined and compared the informations we receive from these,

these, and have reasoned *à posteriori* from the works to the will of God, from the constitution of the system wherein we are placed by him to our interest and duty in it, we shall have laid the foundations of morality on a rock, instead of laying them on the moving lands, or the hollow ground, that metaphysics point out to us. Thus we shall know, as God designed we should know, and pursue, as far as our part extends, the plan of infinite wisdom. Instead of amusing ourselves vainly with a false sublime, let us keep soberly within the bounds of our nature; let us reason cautiously, pronounce modestly, practise sincerely, and hope humbly. To do this, is to be wise and good: and to be wise and good, is better far than to be a philosopher, a metaphysician, or even a divine.

THE law of their nature is the concern of all men alike. All men are, therefore, able alike to discover this law, and the constitution of things from which it is derived. All men do not discover it indeed alike, tho all men, even the most savage and ignorant, have, as I believe, some imperfect notions of it, which observation and experience force into their minds. If there are any creatures of human figure, to whom even thus much cannot be ascribed, which I do not believe, they are ranked as improperly under the human species, as they would be if they had a different figure. Ignorance about the law of nature, like ignorance about many other truths, to which no
man

man can refuse his assent when they are proposed to his understanding, is due to some or more of those many reasons, by which men are diverted from the pursuit of attainable knowledge, or stopped in it: and their errors, in this case, may be imputed, in some degree, to the same causes, as well as to affections, passions, and the force of custom. But philosophers, divines, and lawyers, who divest, or should divest, themselves of affections and passions, and pay no regard to custom, run, by a contrary method, into a variety of contrary opinions concerning one of the plainest and most important objects of our thoughts. The former stop short of that knowledge which lies within the bounds of human comprehension. The latter overlook it, whilst they aim at knowledge that is unattainable, because it lies beyond the bounds of human nature, and therefore of human comprehension.

THE notions, on which CUDWORTH endeavours to ground eternal and immutable morality, have prevailed much, with some difference in the representation of them, among antient and modern theists. Let us mention two of the latter only, besides himself, GROTIUS and CLARKE.

ONE would be tempted to think that when these men assert the eternity, independency, and immutability of the great principles of the law of our nature, they mean all this comparatively only; comparatively with civil laws, which are novel,

dependent on the will of man, and mutable at his pleasure. One might think it strange too that they should not distinguish between the divine prescience, and the divine institution; or imagine a law, made for man, co-eternal with God. But their theological purpose in maintaining an opinion liable to so many objections, and quite unnecessary to the establishment of our moral obligations on the firmest foundation, will appear in the course of these reflections. Divines, among whom the great lawyer we have mentioned has a just right to be reckoned, see far before them, and are determined in laying of principles by the consequences they intend to draw.

PUFFENDORF * is of a contrary opinion to GROTIUS. He censures very justly those, who, like him, endeavour to join with God any coeval, extrinsecal principle, which they assume that he was obliged to follow in assigning the forms and essences of things. He maintains that the actions of men are perfectly indifferent, if you set aside the consideration of all law divine and human; that the morality of actions in a social creature is derived from that social nature which God has been pleased to give him, and not from any immutable necessity; and he shews how ill those passages of scripture, which GROTIUS quotes, are applied to prove an original law so truly common to God and man, that God permits himself to be judged according to it.

* Law of nature and nations, L. i. c. 2.

CLARKE has, in our time, distinguished himself in defence of the doctrine we oppose. He has made it the first proposition in his Evidences of natural and revealed religion, with a magisterial air, and all the confidence of those men who talk on every occasion of nothing less than demonstration. “Fidenter sane, ut solent isti, nihil tam
“verens, quam ne dubitare aliqua de re videre-
“tur*.” This proposition, however, on which he presumes to rest so important a cause, as on the angular stone of all religion, will appear to be absurd and inconsistent, when it is once analysed; and his proofs of it will appear to prove nothing, or to prove what is out of dispute. Thus I think: and if I think rightly, there is the more reason to demolish this false foundation because it is as easy, as necessary, to lay one that is undeniably true.

THE general absurdity and inconsistency of this proposition lies here. The demonstrator confounds in it two contrary propositions; and sliding, insensibly to many readers, from that which no reasonable man can admit, into that which every reasonable man must admit, he means nothing by a pomp of words, or he means to make the proofs of the latter pass for proofs of the former. He asserts that necessary and eternal relations of different things to one another, and the consequent fitness and unfitness of application of

* TULLY De nat. deor. Lib. i. speaking of VELLEIUS the epicurean.

these things and of their relations, determine the will of God always and necessarily to chuse to act only what is agreeable to justice, equity, goodness, and truth, that is, to those abstract ideas, in order to the welfare of the whole universe. These expressions lead me, they cannot but lead me, to understand that the same doctrine is intended, as, we have said, no reasonable man, no good thief most certainly, can admit, the doctrine of eternal independent essences, as it has been taught. But the state of the question is changed at once : for, after asserting that all subordinate rational beings ought to determine their wills, and conduct their actions, by the same eternal rules by which God proceeds in governing, and therefore proceeded in creating, the world ; the instances brought to prove it are all relative to our human state, and the rules are such as could be no rules antecedently to the existence of subordinate rational beings, and moral agents. Let us mention two or three of these instances. That God is infinitely superior to man, is as clear no doubt, as that infinity is larger than a point, or eternity longer than a moment. That men should worship and obey God, for I dare not use theological familiarity and talk of imitating God, is as fit, as it is true that they depend on him. In short, general benevolence, fidelity in particular compacts, and all the duties of natural religion, arise most evidently from a fitness of application of different things, and their different relations, arising from the nature which God, according to his good pleasure has bestowed upon us,

us, and from that of the system which he has constituted, and wherein he has placed us. That God is superior to man, and that man ought to worship and obey God, are truths that have existed ever since there was such a rational creature as man to perceive them, and to stand in such a relation to God. That benevolence, fidelity, and every other moral obligation has existed likewise, ever since there was such a moral agent as man to be obliged by them, and to stand in such relations as we stand to one another. Is it not enough that we go as high as our nature, to discover the laws of it? To what purpose do we make that intricate, by metaphysical abstractions, which God has made so extremely plain?

I MIGHT ask, to what purpose this kind of legerdemain is employed in reasoning? After Dr. CUDWORTH has talked dogmatically of eternal, immutable, independent natures, it comes out that he does not mean real natures, but the ideas that we frame of natures that we assume. Much in the same manner, after Dr. CLARKE has talked, at least as dogmatically, of an eternal rule by which God has always acted necessarily, and of justice, equity, goodness, and truth, as of intelligible natures which have always existed, and agreeably to which God has always directed his conduct, he proceeds to talk of this very rule not as a rule eternally resulting from the eternal and independent differences of things and of their relations, but as a rule resulting from a system of beings

whom God created in time, and from the relation in which he constituted them to himself and to one another. No man will deny that a square is double to a triangle of equal base and height, from all eternity if the doctor pleases, and rather than engage in such useless disquisitions: but every man of common sense will deny that there could be a law of human nature before any such nature was in being. CLARKE raises man first to act by the same rule, by which God made and governs the universe: and after that, he restrains infinite knowledge and wisdom to act by the same rule by which the creatures of God determine, or ought to determine, their wills, and according to the ideas that they derive from the contemplation of their own system of being; that is, of a small, and doubtless an inconsiderable, part of the universe, not, by immense degrees, of the whole. “*Quo teneam Protea nodo?*” By the first we are bewildered in metaphysical abstractions, that have no tendency to promote morality; and by the last, divines obtain a latitude of making what hypotheses they please, and a pretence of reasoning with the same licence about the designs and conduct of the living God, as they would take in reasoning about those of a dead, but not of a living, monarch. This is the true theological secret: and I believe you will think it is so, when we come to consider CLARKE’S doctrine concerning the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, and the use he makes of it.

BUT

BUT to carry on the analyse of this first proposition. We are told in it that these eternal and necessary differences of things, for such they are still called, cause it to be the duty of men, or lay an obligation upon them, to act according to this rule, separate from the consideration of the will of God, and from any expectation of reward, or fear of punishment, annexed either by natural consequence or by positive appointment. Now surely this must be thought a very odd method of promoting natural religion, and giving evidences of it, since it puts the atheist and the theist into the same case; and as rules were inconsistently jumbled together before, so characters are now. The atheist may have regard to natural differences alone, and to the consequences of acting or not acting according to them. He may see that altho human actions, considered merely as natural, and abstractedly from all relations, circumstances, and consequences, might be deemed absolutely indifferent, yet no human action can be so considered. The atheist, therefore, may think himself very truly under an obligation of interest, arising from the different consequences of his actions, tho he acknowledges no divine legislature: and he would laugh very justly at the man who should tell him that he was not obliged to pass over the bridge, tho he might be drowned in the torrent, because there was no act of parliament for it. The theist indeed must think himself, in this respect, under an obligation of duty, as well as interest.

terest. Whatever actions are naturally good or evil, must appear to him to be so morally. They derive their particular natures from the constitution of our system. They might not have been what they are, if this system had not been what it is: and this system could not have been what it is, if God, who made it, had not willed that it should be so. Nay, even on the supposition of eternal necessary differences, and independent natures, it would be still true that the will of God constitutes the obligation of duty. It would be false to assert, in the terms of this proposition, that the supposed eternal necessary differences of things constitute it alone. How independent soever we suppose the different natures of things to be, it depended most certainly on the will of God, who made the system, to introduce them into it as he thought fit. If he did not make, he assembled, he ordered them; and whatever obligation results from them, in this system, results from them therefore by his will, and is imposed by it. Once more, and to conclude this analyse. It is plainly false to assert that men are obliged to observe the laws of nature on abstract considerations, and for reasons alone of the same kind, as those which determine them to agree about proportions or disproportion in geometry and arithmetic. The advantages or disadvantages, annexed by natural consequence to the observation or breach of the law of nature, do certainly determine the atheist who observes it without believing a law in the strict sense of the word, but believing an obligation

in the strictest : and it is manifest that no other consideration can, nor, on his principles, ought to determine him. The thief is determined by the same advantages or disadvantages still more strongly, because he looks on them as annexed, not only by natural consequence, but by positive and divine appointment. I speak of the thief as a philosopher only. If we considered him as a christian, we should consider him under the influence of further and greater advantages or disadvantages, annexed by the same divine appointment. Thus the matter stands very clearly : and tho men may puzzle it by playing with the words inducement, obligation, will of a superior, law, and others, they cannot alter the state of it.

RIGHT reason consists in a conformity with truth, and truth in a conformity with nature. Nature, or the aggregate of things which are, is the great source from whence all the rivulets of real knowledge must be derived. When we cannot go up, and as far as we cannot go up thither, we must remain in ignorance : and we may be the more contented to remain so in several cases, because we go up in several to the spring head, or at least as far towards it, as the Author of all nature thought it necessary that creatures in our rank of being should go. It is a strong instance of the perversity of the human will, but it is true in fact, that men attempt often to go beyond nature, for no better a reason than this, because they cannot go up to it ; or than this, because they do not find
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that to be, which imagination had told them might be. These men are metaphysicians : and by this method they have fallen at all times into error, or into something worse perhaps than error, but worse surely than ignorance, into doubt, perplexity, needless disquisitions, and endless disputation. Thus it has fared with the greatest scholars, and with men of the nicest discernment and acuteness, with CUDWORTH, for instance, and with CLARKE: In all these cases, the safest side is that of ignorance: if he may be called ignorant, who keeps within the obvious bounds of nature and truth, and presumes to continue the pursuit of knowledge no further. Ignorance belongs more properly to him who is thought to know, whilst he transgresses these bounds, and calls every hypothesis a demonstration.

THAT the philosophers we have mentioned are guilty of this absurdity, has been shewn : and it would not be hard to shew, by many proofs, that whilst they pretend to establish morality, they do real injury to theism. They make the incomprehensible Being, in a certain sense, too comprehensible, and the knowledge of the all-perfect Being too nearly allied to the imperfection of the human.

THINGS are what they are by nature, not by will, says CUDWORTH. Would it not be more consistent with theism to say, things are what they are by immutable natures, which the will of God has

has given them? Would it not be more within the bounds of human conception, and therefore more reasonable, to say, that God constituted these natures in constituting this system; than to assume that these natures, which are contained in our system, and to the knowledge of which we arrive no other way than by the gradual knowledge that we acquire of our system, are independent on it and on the God who made it?

THE reason of things, deduced from their differences, from their different relations, and from the different consequences of their applications, may be sufficient for the atheist. He may refer the whole to the powers and operations of something, he knows not what, but something self-existent and eternal, which he thinks fit to call the universe, or universal nature. The theist is not so content. The reason of things is to him that clue by which he conducts himself in discovering the existence of God, and the will of God, as far as man is an object of it. But the will of God is something less, and the reason of things is something more, in the esteem of such of these men as call themselves divines. An eternal reason of things, arising from their independent natures, and known to man, as well as to God, is, according to these philosophers and divines, the true criterion of moral good and evil, the rule by which the Creator and the creature are obliged alike to act; with this difference, arising from the perfections of one and the imperfections of the other, God can-

not act otherwise, man may. Is it not to be apprehended that men, tainted with such notions as these, will reason constantly *à priori*, and from them, down to their moral obligations: the consequence of which may be, that these obligations will become as unfixed and as fluctuating in their minds, as general and abstract ideas usually are? Is it not to be apprehended that they will never condescend to reason *à posteriori*, and from the actual constitution of things, up to the will of God and the duty of man; the consequence of which would be to establish a rule of judgment concerning the great principles of moral obligations, as invariable as the obligations themselves?

THESE metaphysical divines are, for this reason, the more to be condemned, that, whilst they pretend to knowledge, that neither men nor angels, I presume, are capable of having, knowledge of divine ideas, and of the rule by which infinite wisdom governs, and whilst they would entice us by learned language, vague expressions, and false airs of demonstration, to seek the laws of our nature out of the scene of our nature, and beyond the reach of any clear conceptions we are able to have; this very law is enacted in all the works of God, promulgated in terms the most proportionable to human conception, and writ in characters so plain that he who runs may read them.

THE great principles of moral truth are as much founded in the nature of things, as those of mathematical

mathematical truth: and it is not a little less absurd to contradict the former by our words or actions, than to deny the latter. If the latter of these have an advantage in this respect, that the demonstrations of them are carried on with greater steadiness and precision, by the immediate and joint assistance of sense and intellect; the former have an advantage, for such it may be reckoned, of another kind. We perceive the truth of both with equal evidence; but as the former are much more important to us than the latter, we may be ignorant of all mathematical, we cannot be so of all moral, truth. We discover one, the other discovers itself; it obtrudes itself on the mind, and the mind perceives it with greater satisfaction. He who demonstrates that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, or that a square is double to a triangle of equal base and height, has a dry inward complacency. But he who contemplates the obvious advantages of benevolence and justice to society, and of society to mankind, will feel a pleasure much more sensible: and the same proportion will hold in all the progress the mind makes to discover mathematical, and moral truth.

III.

IF any man should advance, that we ought to proceed on the known principles of mathematics, not because there are such in nature, but because mathematicians have made an agreement
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or compact to proceed upon them as if there were such, I suspect that he would be esteemed mad. What then was HOBBS, his predecessors, and his successors, who affirmed that all distinction between moral good and evil, just and unjust, is established solely by civil institution; and that our moral obligations are derived from the laws of society, not from the law of nature? This extravagant system has been over and over refuted by many writers of our own and other countries. Some reflections, such as my first thoughts suggest to me, I too will bestow upon it. They shall not be long: and whether they are new or no, they shall not be copied from any one. It seems then to me that civil societies could not have been formed, nor the distinction of just and unjust, nor the honestum and decorum of life have been established, if there had not been, antecedently, such a law of nature as HOBBS denies, and directly opposite to that which he supposes. Your great predecessors, AMPHION and ORPHEUS, would have strung their lyres to little purpose, if there had not been a corresponding unison in the human constitution. The letter of the fable would have proved true, as soon as the moral of it; stones would have leaped into order, and have builded themselves into walls; tigers and wolves would have grown tame and have formed peaceful societies, as soon as men, if there had not been a law of nature peculiar to man: there was therefore such a law. We may consider man in a state of nature as an artless, but we must consider him in no
state

state as an irrational, creature : and to have been such a creature as HOBBS represents him, he must have been rather irrational than artless. The proof that this philosopher brings to shew that man is made by discipline, that is, the discipline of civil or political government, and not by nature, fit for society, is a strange one indeed. He says, that “ Societies are confederacies ;” which is true in a proper sense : “ that the force of “ the conventions, by which they are framed, is “ unknown to children and illiterate people, and “ the utility of them to those who never experienced the evils that arise from the want of society that it is manifest therefore (all “ men being born children) that all men are born “ unfit for society, and that many, perhaps the “ greatest number, remain some how or other “ unfit for it as long as they live : that all these “ however, the adult as well as infants, have the “ human nature :” and from hence he draws the conclusion I have mentioned. Now for those who never experience the evils that men are exposed to out of society, it is enough to say that they feel, and must feel, without the help of this contrast, unless they are idiots, the benefits of society ; and for the rest, his argument is no better than this would be : All men are born infants, infants have not the use of speech, some men are born dumb, and have it not during their whole lives ; men are therefore by their nature incapable, or unfit to speak. If men were for any time, for years or ages, in that state of war and confusion

sion which HOBBS assumes to be their natural state, it would not follow that every one had, by nature, a right to do what every one had, by particular circumstances and contingency of events, the power to do. It would only follow that instinct determines sooner, and appetite and passion more strongly, than reason. It would only follow that the spring of human nature exerted its force, before the balance, which is designed to controul and regulate the impulses of it, was put into activity, as it must be according to the same nature, by time and experience. But the case assumed has no pretence to be admitted; neither is it possible to conceive, on any supposition, such a state of mankind as the philosopher of Malmesbury had figured to himself. How ever you suppose the human race to have begun, societies, little indeed, but societies still, must have been co-eval with it. If there was a first man and a first woman, they and their children, for these could not nurse and educate themselves, must have constituted a first society. If numbers of men and women sprung out of the earth at once, there might be some contests among the men about these primitive ladies, and some violence might be employed, and some confusion might arise, in the immediate hurry of copulation. But after that, the same instinct, which had caused variance, would have formed societies. Families would have been soon raised; and the authority, subordination, order, and union, necessary to their well being, must have followed naturally: as we
may

may observe that they do among the most savage people. Men never were, because they could never subsist, in a state of absolute individuality. Self-love, directed by instinct to mutual pleasure, made the union of man and woman. Self-love made that of parents and children. Self-love begat sociability; and reason, a principle of human nature, as well as instinct, improved it. Reason improved it, extended it to relations more remote, and united several families into one community, as instinct had united several individuals into one family. Reason performed this by the help of experience: and what is the effect of experience? It is not to make any thing new in nature: it is to discover what was in nature, tho unobserved before. We might say as truly that COLUMBUS discovered a new world, in the absolute as well as relative sense of the word, as to say, with HOBBS, that when men distinguished between just and unjust, and made laws and institutions on that distinction, they made that to be just or unjust which was indifferent before. The natural obligation to exercise benevolence, to administer justice, and to keep compacts, is as evident to human reason, as the desire of happiness is agreeable to human instinct. We desire by instinct, we acquire by reason. The natural desire leads us necessarily to the natural obligation: and we proceed, in this case, from intuitive to demonstrative knowledge, by the same sure steps, by which we proceed from the knowledge of our own, to that of God's, existence. The law of na-

ture, or of right reason, is the real original of all positive laws. Such it appeared to TULLY^a, “Ergo est lex,” says he, “justorum injustorum-
 “que distinctio ad illam antiquissimam et rerum
 “omnium principem expressa naturam, ad quam
 “leges hominum diriguntur.” As the civil laws derive their authority from a conformity to this original, so it is their real, or supposed tendency to the same end that induces men to submit to them. TULLY^b shall support my opinion again. It is certain, according to him, that they who gave laws to mankind “populis ostendisse
 “se ea scripturos atque laturus, quibus illi ad-
 “scriptis susceptisque honeste beateque viverent*.

^a De Leg. Lib. ii.

^b Ibid.

* Tho I would not take TULLY for my guide in matters of the first philosophy, yet his opinions are often true, and his authority is always of weight, if not to determine, yet to confirm, us on such subjects as these. It does so very reasonably in the notions that are advanced, and implied in this paragraph. They who assume that the will of a superior can alone constitute obligation, do really trifle, and mistake too grossly: since not only a moral obligation may exist without a law, but a law may be such as to create no moral obligation. When we speak of moral obligations, either we mean nothing, or we mean that we are tied, bound †, and under an internal, that is, a moral, necessity of conforming ourselves to those rules which are expressed in the constitution of our nature, and on the observation of which the happiness of our kind depends. Reason is in this case the obliger. A rational creature is the obliged; and he is so obliged as no law, made by mere will, can of itself oblige. The mere will of a legislator may constrain, may force, may create an outward, a physical necessity; but this necessity implies no obligation: and if kings lords and

† Obligatio a ligando.

LET

LET it not be said that men have been sometimes seduced, and sometimes forced, to receive the will of other men for law; that this has been done without any regard to the law of nature, and might have been done just as effectually on the supposition of no such law. Reason will tell us that it cannot, and experience that it has not been so done, whatever appearances may have struck those who do not look far enough back to the causes of things. Men are not attracted by sounds or odors, nor hived, like bees; and, far from submitting to civil laws made by mere will, they have submitted to these, that they might not be governed by mere will. That fraud and force hold men in subjection, I do not deny, the first principally to ecclesiastical, and both to civil, tyranny. But this I deny, that fraud and force were sufficient of themselves, and the true, sole,

commons had enacted, that when parents lived to the age of fourscore their children should put them to death, you would not have thought yourself under an obligation of putting your old mother to death. In short, human laws are in a first consideration nothing more than the dictates of will, the will of a legislator, enforced by superior power; and in a second, they may acquire, or not acquire, the right of obliging, as they have the power of forcing. But this order is inverted in the divine law of nature. The moral necessity of acting agreeably to it, in order to secure that happiness which we are determined irresistibly to desire, is a first consideration, and is alone sufficient to create obligation. In discovering this law we are led to discover the legislator: and will is added to invest obligation with all the forms of law, the will of that Being who constituted the obligation when he made the human system, and who, by constituting the obligation, made and promulgated the law.

and original means of submitting men to such tyranny.

I SHALL not speak here of religious tyranny, the first, and, with respect to the authority it profanes, the most audacious, offspring of fraud. Enough has been said on that subject in another essay. Here I confine myself to civil institutions and civil government alone : and I rest astonished at the strange perversion of reason in those men, who make the abuse of natural law, as far as they can, pass for the original of all law. Could the fraud, or, if you will soften the terms, the art, of legislators have imposed originally for laws the dictates of mere will ? Certainly not. Mere will would have revolted mankind from them, if it had appeared to be such : and it would have appeared to be such, if there had not been, in the nature of things and in the reason of man, a law which sometimes gave, and always seemed to give, a sanction to their laws. What therefore could fraud do, or has fraud done, in this respect ? Nothing more than this : When reason and experience determined men to walk in those paths which the law of nature points out, and which lead to the happiness of their kind ; fraud, like an unfaithful guide, led them insensibly into others. Nature directed them to unite in societies, and to submit to civil laws, for their common utility. Fraud betrayed them into the tyranny of mere will : and when various institutions and various customs had made them lose sight of the law of their nature, it was not hard to persuade

suade them that the dictates of will, designed for particular not common utility, and even repugnant to this law, were deduced from it. Thus, again, as to force : When absolute power is once established, it may impose arbitrary will for law. It cannot make things just or unjust, nor create natures, that existed before government, human government itself. But as they were ill observed then, they may be ill defined now, in particular instances. The unjust may pass for what it is in some cases, and be decreed just in others : and thus civil laws not only may, but do very frequently, confound the distinction that nature has made, the very distinction which is so falsely ascribed to their sole authority. But whatever absolute power does when it is established, how could it be established originally, and in a state of nature like that which is supposed ? Absolute power must have been acquired by superior force, and superior force by superior numbers. Still the question will return, how were these superior numbers collected in one interest, and under one direction ? They could not be so originally by force ; for force supposes them, and is derived from them. HERCULES might have travelled with his club in his hand, from the east to the west : his club might have destroyed here and there a monster, but would have formed a society no where. Nothing but consent can form originally collective bodies of men. Nothing but consent, therefore, to which men are determined by the sociability of their nature, by an antecedent law,

law, could have raised an army, or created that force by which it is assumed that all laws, those we call civil and those we call natural, were alike imposed on mankind.

On the whole, as fast as families united in larger societies, and the same plain and simple rules, the first rudiments of natural law, that had been sufficient under paternal government, were so no longer, but required greater extension and a greater variety of application; philosophers and legislators arose, constituted governments, and made laws wisely and unwisely, agreeably and disagreeably to the nature of things, according to the general imperfection of human productions. But there would have been no societies to whom laws might be given, no pretence to give them, no disposition to receive them, if there had not been a primeval law, a law by which the families of men were governed in that state which we commonly call a state of nature, and which laid the principles of future government in another state, to which they were advancing gradually. This primeval law is that code wherein all the laws, to which God has subjected his human creatures, are contained. Civil laws are the glosses which sometimes explain and sometimes perplex it, which men make, and men may alter at their will; whilst the other remains immutable like that of God. HOBBS seems to admit this primeval law, and to give up his own doctrine in that place of his book *De cive* where he speaks to
this

this effect, for I quote here upon my memory,
 “ that men were obliged to enter into compacts
 “ to preserve one another ; and to seek peace
 “ wherever it could be had, in order to pre-
 “ vent the mischief and desolation which would
 “ attend his imaginary state of nature.” Now
 if some things were fit to be prevented, some
 things were unfit to be done, in the supposed state
 of nature : from whence it follows that the di-
 stinction between just and unjust was made before
 governments were instituted, or legislators made it;
 which the same Mr. HOBBS denies.

I CONCLUDE my reflections by observing that
 the whole hypothesis seems to be raised on three
 great mistakes. It considers man, in the state of
 nature, under the direction of his appetites alone,
 and going out of that state as soon as he begins to
 exercise his reason ; altho HOBBS says, inconsist-
 ently enough on some occasions, that right reason
 is the rule of human actions, even antecedently
 to civil laws. But to think rightly of man in
 this very state, we ought to consider him under
 the actual direction of all his natural faculties, of
 his reason as well as his appetites ; of his reason
 artless indeed and untutored by experience, but
 therefore undebauched likewise, and in all cases
 sufficient to demonstrate to him the first general
 and obvious principles on which the happiness of
 his kind is built, and to which he is plainly
 and strongly directed by the necessities of his na-
 ture. In the next place, this hypothesis considers

each man as an individual, no more a member of the great commonwealth of mankind than of any particular commonwealth; it supposes him to have a right to every thing, and to be a rival and enemy on that account to every other man: whereas it is not more evident that we are born to walk with our legs, and to handle things with our hands, than it is that we are born to assist, and to be assisted by, one another. It is not more plain that each man cannot enjoy every thing, than it is that each man has not an unlimited right to enjoy every thing, or that the right of each man, where things are common, is limited by his real wants. It did not require more sagacity to discover these truths in a state of nature, than it did to reason and to act as unnaturally as mankind must have done in a perpetual round of jealousy, precaution, and design, according to their plan of life, such as HOBBS had imagined it. In the next and last place, this hypothesis confounds the ideas of original laws, and of laws made to explain and renew these. It does this unnecessarily too, unless we suppose this philosopher to have been so absolutely an atheist, that he was forced by his system to ascribe the obligation of all law to man, and not to God: for nothing can be better founded, nor more consequential, in the reason of all those who acknowledge such a being, than this opinion, that the author of all nature, having given to his different creatures different natures, according to the different purposes for which they were designed in the scheme of his providence,

vidence, and every one of these natures including it's own peculiar law, whether that of instinct or that of reason, the most rational of his human creatures established from time to time rules of conduct and government conformable to it, and which are in particular instances so many republications of it. To use an obvious and familiar example: the same rights of Englishmen, which were settled by the great charter, have been enacted over again by many particular laws: would Mr. HOBBS have dated these rights, if he had admitted them, from these later laws? He would not most certainly.

To conclude therefore: nothing of this kind can deserve our attention more, because nothing can contribute more to keep us within the golden mean of truth, than to observe the strange extremes into which philosophers are carried by presumption, by an affectation of singularity, and by other motives, little less inexcusable, tho in appearance more plausible. Thus they are carried, in the instance before us, some to set the principles of morality out of our sight and their own too, whilst they assume them to be derived from eternal natures, independent on the will of God; some, to lay these principles as much too low, as low as the level of human policy, whilst they assume them to be nominal natures, dependent on the will of man; some, to insist that God wills we should follow, in our moral conduct, the same eternal rule which he follows himself, in
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the government of the universe; and some, to affirm that, far from having any rule at all, every thing is indifferent in it's nature, and man by nature a lawless savage.

IV.

AFTER censuring these extremes, it becomes proper to enquire, a little more particularly, what the truth is, which lies between them; how the laws of nature develop themselves to the human understanding; how self-love leads to sociability, and the most confined principle extends itself to be that which connects the whole race of mankind. But before I say any thing further on these subjects, I must give some answer to a query which our good friend the b. of C. makes. The query is this, “Whether there is any absurdity in supposing that man should imitate the author of nature, so far as he is able?” This is said to be “not only agreeable to the christian plan, but also to that of the Stoics.” See BALBUS in TULLY De nat. deorum.

IN answer to this query I confess, and think myself obliged in conscience to confess, that I hold it to be absurd, and worse than absurd, to assert that man can imitate God, except in a sense so very remote, and so improper, that the expression should never be used, and much less such a duty be recommended. Divines have distinguished, in their bold analyses, between God's physi-

cal and his moral attributes: for which distinction, tho I see several theological, I do not see one religious, purpose that it is necessary to answer. But, the distinction once made by their supreme authority, tho they admit that we cannot imitate God in the exercise of the former, they insist that we can, and ought to imitate him in the exercise of the latter: and, to complete this proof, that consists of affirmation rather than argument, they maintain, at least CLARKE* does so very peremptorily, that the divine moral attributes, that is, holiness, goodness, justice, righteousness, and truth, are the very same in God as they are in our ideas. Nay he adds that God, out of a tender and hearty concern for the happiness of man (strange words to be applied to the Supreme Being!) desires to be imitated by him in those perfections, which are the foundation of his own unchangeable happiness.

WHEN they distinguish thus between the physical and moral attributes, it is plain that they see how absurd they would appear, if they proposed to creatures, conscious of their corporeal and mental weakness, to imitate, even so far as they are able or in any degree, infinite power and wisdom; which would be a ridiculous mimicry, not a real imitation. When they propose this imitation of the moral attributes, they flatter themselves that the ridicule will be less liable to observation. These attributes are less so; and they can

* Evidences, p. 116.

make, by the help of their precarious metaphysical and logical reasonings, such representations of them as may seem to render them imitable by man. But they would do well to consider that, if the moral attributes were demonstrated by arguments *à priori*, and they are not so even by them, to be the same in God as they are in our ideas, yet this general assurance would be far from making them objects of human imitation. To be such, they must be known *à posteriori*, like his physical attributes; for we can have no knowledge of either, except that which sense and experience give us. They must be discerned in the works of God, and in the conduct of his providence: and it is evident that they are not, cannot be, so discerned in them as to be proper objects of our imitation. The divine attributes are exercised in such innumerable relations absolutely unknown to us, that tho we are sure the exercise of them, in the immensity of the universe, is always directed by the all-perfect Being to that which is fittest to be done on the whole; yet the notions of created beings who see them in one relation alone, like us, cannot be applied to them with any propriety, nor with any certainty, sufficient to make them objects of their imitation. This is so true, that in many cases we should act in direct contradiction to the law of our nature, if we made the conduct of divine providence the rule of ours. God makes his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust. He involves the innocent with the

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the guilty in great calamities : and there is no theme on which divines enlarge more pathetically, than on the unjust distribution of good and evil, when they join with the atheists, tho for different purposes, in one common cry. Are these appearances, however constant some, and however frequent others, of them may be, to stand as objects that we are to imitate in our moral conduct ? I think no man will say that they are, except those who have so little regard to consistency that they propose the first to our imitation, whilst they aggravate the two last to such a degree, that they assume the justice and goodness of God's dispensations, in this system, to be capable of no other vindication than that which supposes another. These writers and preachers therefore must mean, when they exhort us to imitate God, not the God whom we see in his works, and in all that his providence orders or permits ; but the God who appears in their representations of him, and who is often such a God as no pious theist can acknowledge.

WHEN BALBUS, since BALBUS is cited on this occasion, endeavours to prove the world a wise being and a God, he says, speaking after CHRYSIPPUS, “ ipse autem homo ortus est ad mundum “ contemplandum et imitandum.” He is born to do this so far as he is able : for the world is perfect, and he is only “ quaedam particula perfecti.” He has only a participation, our divines would say, of the divine perfections. Further

on, the same BALBUS, being to prove that the world is governed by the providence of the gods, assumes that the gods must be “non solum animantes, sed etiam rationis compotes;” and that they must live together in a sort of civil society, governing the world like one common republic or city. From hence it follows, he says, that there is the same reason, the same truth, and the same law of right and wrong utrobique, both in God and man. The wisdom, the reason, the prudence of the gods are greater indeed, tho of the same kind: and since these are employed by them “in maximis et optimis rebus,” they must be employed of necessity in the government of the world; because nothing can be greater nor better than the world, “nec majus, nec melius mundo.” These are all the passages I recollect, where BALBUS speaks of any thing pertinent to the present question; and I cannot find any thing in them that is favorable to the doctrine taught by platonic and christian divines about our obligation to imitate God. I am sorry to find too that this doctrine is more extravagant than the extravagancies of the Stoics. To maintain that the material world is a divine animal, a wise being, and a god, is blasphemous and absurd. But to say that man is born to contemplate and imitate the world, may admit of a very good sense, with a little interpretation; since it may be made to signify, what it would be better to express plainly, that man is born to contemplate the world, and to conform his behaviour to the will of
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of God, that is manifested, relatively to man, in the constitution of it. Thus the doctrine of BALBUS may receive a reasonable interpretation; which, I am sure, that of CLARKE and other christian divines cannot: and, besides, it will afford as much pathetic matter “*per la predica,*” with the advantage of being true, as the other, which, however piously intended or heard, is false and profane.

THE man, who neglects the duties of natural religion and the obligations of morality, acts against his nature, and lives in open defiance to the author of it. God declares for one order of things, he for another. God blends together the duty and interest of his creature: his creature separates them, despises the duty, and proposes to himself another interest. He, who acts in a conformity to the nature of things, carries on the system of God, and co-operates with him: and surely to put the system of divine wisdom in execution, and to co-operate with the creator, is honor enough for the creature. Thus we may attain to the perfection of our nature, and, by pretending to no more, we may do it real honor: whereas by assuming that we imitate God, we give the strongest proof of the imperfection of our nature, whilst we neglect the real, and aspire vainly at a mock, honor; as pride, seduced by adulation, is prone to do; and as religious pride, wrought up by self-conceit into enthusiasm, does above all others. They who encourage and flatter this
pride,

pride, like CLARKE, are a sort of eunomians, and boast, like the founder of that sect, and the fast friend of the Arians, that they know God as well as he knows himself.

HEATHEN divines were very far from having the same presumption. The gods they pretended to know were inmates in one great house with men, or fellow citizens of one great city. Such gods they might pretend to know, and to imitate too. But we shall not find that those of them, who acknowledged, besides these inferior generated gods, one supreme ungenerated Being, presumed to claim any such intimate acquaintance with him. On the contrary, they supposed him to be above all human conception, and therefore above all human imitation. He did not stand, in their ideas of him, even in the relation to man of creator or governor, except he might be said to stand mediately, through these inferior divinities, in that relation: and thus we have another instance of the strange extremes into which philosophers run. These extremes would be avoided, if they could content themselves to know God as he has thought fit to be known by them: and why are they not, divines especially, so content? He appears in his works, and by easy deductions from our knowledge of them, to be the first, self-existent, intelligent cause of all things, a Being of infinite wisdom and power, and therefore an object to all rational creatures not of curiosity, but of awe, of reverence, of adoration,
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of gratitude, of obedience, and resignation. To what purpose then do divines contend to make him an object of human imitation, by deductions from his nature and attributes, independently of his works, by which alone they can have the little, inadequate, general, but sufficient, knowledge of his nature and attributes that has been mentioned? Do they hope to carry theism, and the obligations of natural religion further, by nice metaphysical speculations, hard to understand, and inconclusive when they are understood, than by those obvious proofs which God has proportioned to the comprehension of every man? I conclude therefore my answer to this query, by asking, in my turn, our excellent friend, whether the doctrine of imitating God, even so far as we are able, does not tend to draw men off unnecessarily, and, if I may say so, wantonly, from real knowledge, into those abstractions that have led so many to confound the divine and the human nature, to imagine an uninterrupted scale of intelligence from man up to God, to flatter themselves with notions, not only of imitating him, but of being united to him, and to invent or adopt, in the licentiousness of imagination, all that metaphysical and mystical blasphemy which has passed for the most sublime theology.

V.

WHAT has been said in answer to the query about imitating God, is not remote from the subject we are upon, tho it may seem a digression,

since it tends to lay the principles of natural law on their true foundation. All that can be said, to any real and useful purpose, concerning this law is extremely plain. It lies too in a very narrow compass: and yet what volumes have been written, what disputes have arisen, about it; whilst men have been, as authors are commonly, much more intent to shew their learning or acuteness, than to set their subject in a clear and sufficient light. A superfluous glare not only tires, but offusques, the intellectual sight: and of this there are examples to be found. But the writers I speak of here seem oftener to do like the schoolmen, of whom my lord BACON says very wittily and justly, that instead of setting up a light sufficient to enlighten a large room, they go about with a small taper, and, whilst they illuminate one corner, darken the rest. He says very truly that they break the solidity of science by the minuteness of their questions; and, we may add as truly, that the learned persons I intend here, of both sorts, puzzle and perplex the plainest thing in the world; sometimes by citations little to the purpose, or of little authority; sometimes by a great apparatus of abstract reasoning, and by dint of explanation. Read SELDEN, read GROTIUS, read CUMBERLAND, read PUFFENDORF, to mention no others, if you have leisure and patience for it: and after you have done so, I will appeal to you for the truth of the judgment I make. There are many curious researches, no doubt, and many excellent observations in these writers; but they seem to be great writers on this subject by much the

the same right, as he might be called a great traveller, who should go from London to Paris by the Cape of Good Hope.

AMONG all the trifling questions that have been raised concerning the law of nature, none is more trifling than the cavil made at the very expression. It is futile and pedantic, and would not deserve of itself even the little notice that I have taken of it occasionally. But the ill consequence of admitting it, with respect to the original and universal obligation of the law, makes it deserve refutation. HOBBS used the term, tho he denied the thing. His point of view was to derive all law from the authority of the civil magistrate; and therefore, tho he acknowledged right reason to be the rule, he would not allow it to be the law, of human actions. But the instances he brings in proof are nothing to the purpose. The laws of nature, taught by philosophers in their writings, are not therefore written laws, nor are the writings of lawyers such, for want of a supreme authority, “*ob defectum auctoritatis summae.*” No doubt they are not. But if they are conformable to the nature of things, they have an authority superior to HOBBS’s supreme authority. Tho philosophers and lawyers collected them, God made them; and civil laws themselves have no real, no intrinsecal authority distinct from this. Nay, an avowed atheist might indulge us in the use of this term, like HOBBS, whether he was one or no, tho some divines will not; for the rule of right reason must

appear evident to him, if he reflects at all on the nature of things, and not the rule alone, but the happiness or unhappiness of mankind, consequent to the observation or the breach of it: all which together, he must own, would amount to a law, if he could bring himself to acknowledge a lawgiver; and comes very near it, however, in a large but proper sense. How should it not, when we collect this double sanction from the same nature from whence we collect the rule?

SELDEN, much more orthodox than HOBBS, in his first book *De jure nat. et gent. juxta dis- ebraeor.* where he treats this matter with that profusion of learning which he pours forth on every occasion, agrees that the principles of natural law were discovered by the right use of reason. But, after this, he endeavours to shew, from the different and contrary placets of philosophers, as well as institutions of legislators, that reason cannot frame such an uniform stated rule of right and wrong as this has been represented, nor much less a law without a legislative authority: and he concludes, as every theist must, and as the Jews did, that God, who made the law of nature, published it originally, and publishes it constantly to men. Now that God made the law, is certain; that he gave it, and still gives it “*perpetua indicatione,*” is no less certain: but the manner in which he gave, and continues to give it, according to the Jews, is very far from being so. It is a rhapsody of assumed fact, and of superstitious and enthu-
siastical

fiastical notions, common to them, to several heathen philosophers, to christian fathers, to scholastic divines, to mahometan doctors, and arabian metaphysicians. To lay the foundation of the law of nature on such vain hypotheses, is to make the most important of human concerns ridiculous, the most distinct and clearest ideas confused and obscure, and, in a word, to hinder us from seeing truth itself in a clear light.

God gave the law of nature, according to the rabbinical doctrine, by word of mouth to ADAM first, and to NOAH afterwards: and the great principles of it were contained in the seven articles that are called *Septem praecepta Noachidarum*, by whom they mean not NOAH and his immediate offspring alone, but the whole race of mankind. How the last of these laws, “*de membro animalis*” “*viventis non comedendo*,” came to be given to ADAM, if it was not lawful to eat any flesh, as they say it was not in the antediluvian world, is not easily explained. We may therefore suppose that they did not mean to include this article among the precepts given to ADAM, tho an inconsistency never stopped the talmudists, and tho the rabbins blunder daily through many that are as obvious as this. The distinction they make between themselves and all other people, with respect to the divine communication of this law, is a little more intelligible. As they were descendants of NOAH, this law was given to them in common with all men; and since there was no written law

before

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before MOSES, their patriarchs themselves could have no other moral law than this tradition. But then, as they were a chosen people, selected and separated from the rest of mankind, God gave them, by his servant MOSES, a peculiar law : and thus they stood distinguished from the rest of the Noachidae, whom they called the Nations ; as the Greeks had the folly to call every man a barbarian who was not a Greek, and as even the modern Italians, to say nothing of the old Romans, have sometimes given the same appellation even to the most civilised of their neighbours.

ANOTHER way, by which, according to the same rabbinical doctrine, the law of nature was and is communicated to man by God, is that of immediate or mediate inspiration, in opposition to mere rational faculties and operations. I call it inspiration, because the Jews imagined an “intellectus “agens,” or active spirit, by the influence or illumination of which, and in concurrence with which, the human understanding is made capable of knowing, not only the laws of nature, but all the other principles of science, and deductions of reason, which are the objects of it. This “intellectus “agens” is sometimes, and to them, God himself, by a particular prerogative belonging to their nation, “ex prerogativa gentis.” To other men it is the minister of God, that illuminates their minds, like an intellectual sun, by a force and with an authority derived from God. It was in the first way, no doubt, that ABRAHAM discovered by phi-

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lofophical meditation, in the midft of idolatry, the exiftence of the one true God : and, to fay the truth, the Jews fhould be, by virtue of this prerogative, the moft enlightened and the moft knowing people on earth ; whereas they feem to have been in all ages the very reverfe ; before their captivity, indocile and ignorant ; after it, credulous and bigot, little curious of the real, much addicted to the imaginary, fciences that were cultivated, by other nations.

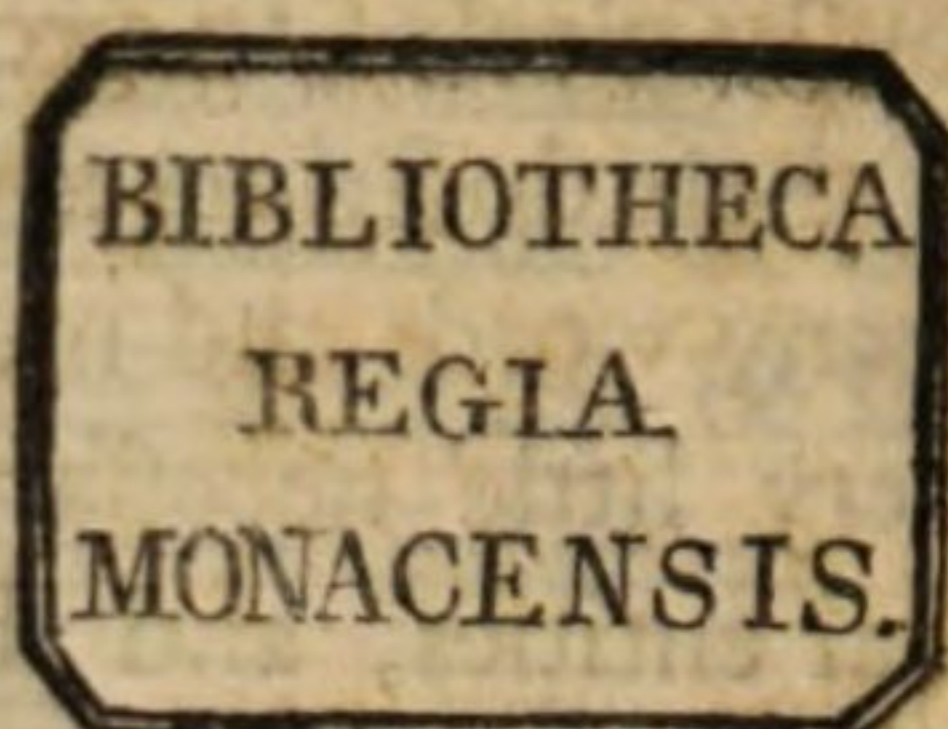
THEY entertained the notion of this fecond kind of infpiration later than that of the firft, “ juxta
“ *disciplinam recentiorem*,” fays SELDEN : and it is no wonder that they did fo. They had been ufed to think that the divine prefence refided amongft them, and that they confulted God by their high prieft ; that he fpoke immediately to their prophets, and exercifed his power immediately in the conduct of their affairs. But afterwards, tho he was near them ftill, he was not fo near them ; and mediate infpiration to illuminate their minds became neceffary. Befides, it was not till after their captivity that a more refined philofophy, and notions more metaphyfical than any they had had before, began to be introduced among them, whilft they lived under the Seleucidae and the Ptolemys, in ages when the firft philofophy was growing up to that pitch of enthufiafm and madnefs at which it arrived in the fchool of Alexandria, and wherever the docttrines of the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians prevailed. From hence, I fuppofe, it has happened that this dogma
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of the rabbins bears so near a resemblance to the opinions of the greek, and, in imitation of them, of the arabian, metaphysicians, who confounded together, with more difference of expression than of meaning, if any of them can be said properly to have had a meaning, the divine and human reason. But however all this may have been, the rabbins assert that the divine illuminating presence, by which alone men are able to discover the law of nature, illuminated chiefly the descendants of SETH and of SEM, till the days in which the law was given by MOSES, when seven other prophets only arose among the nations; and that from this æra the divine illumination has seldom shined on any persons except themselves. So that, on this hypothesis, no great improvement has been made in the sciences since the days of MOSES, except by the Jews.

I HAVE drawn this sketch from SELDEN, in order to contrast the extravagancy of these notions, which are derived from a true principle, that the law of nature is the law of God, with those of HOBBS, which are founded on this false principle, that the laws of nature are the laws of civil magistrates: and I conclude upon the whole, that we shall do much better to trust ourselves than such masters, who lead us into error about the origin of natural law, or about the means of arriving at the knowledge of it. One makes the origin independent on God, and some divines do little less. Another makes the means of arriving at the knowledge

ledge independent on man, and above the strength of his natural reason; tho the author of nature has been graciously pleased to proportion them one to the other. If these doctrines are hurtful in different respects, many words and much time are spent about others very little necessary, about abstract notions of moral entities, and about the causes of moral truth, concerning which we may easily fall into error (whilst we can fall into none concerning the great principles of it) unless we have the light of that nature to which our search is directed. The philosopher may, because he does this; I had almost said must: but the man of common sense cannot err about these principles, tho he may remain in ignorance about some of them, for want of industry or opportunity to discover them all.

The end of the Third volume.





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